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THE NEW REPUBLIC

June 20, 1981

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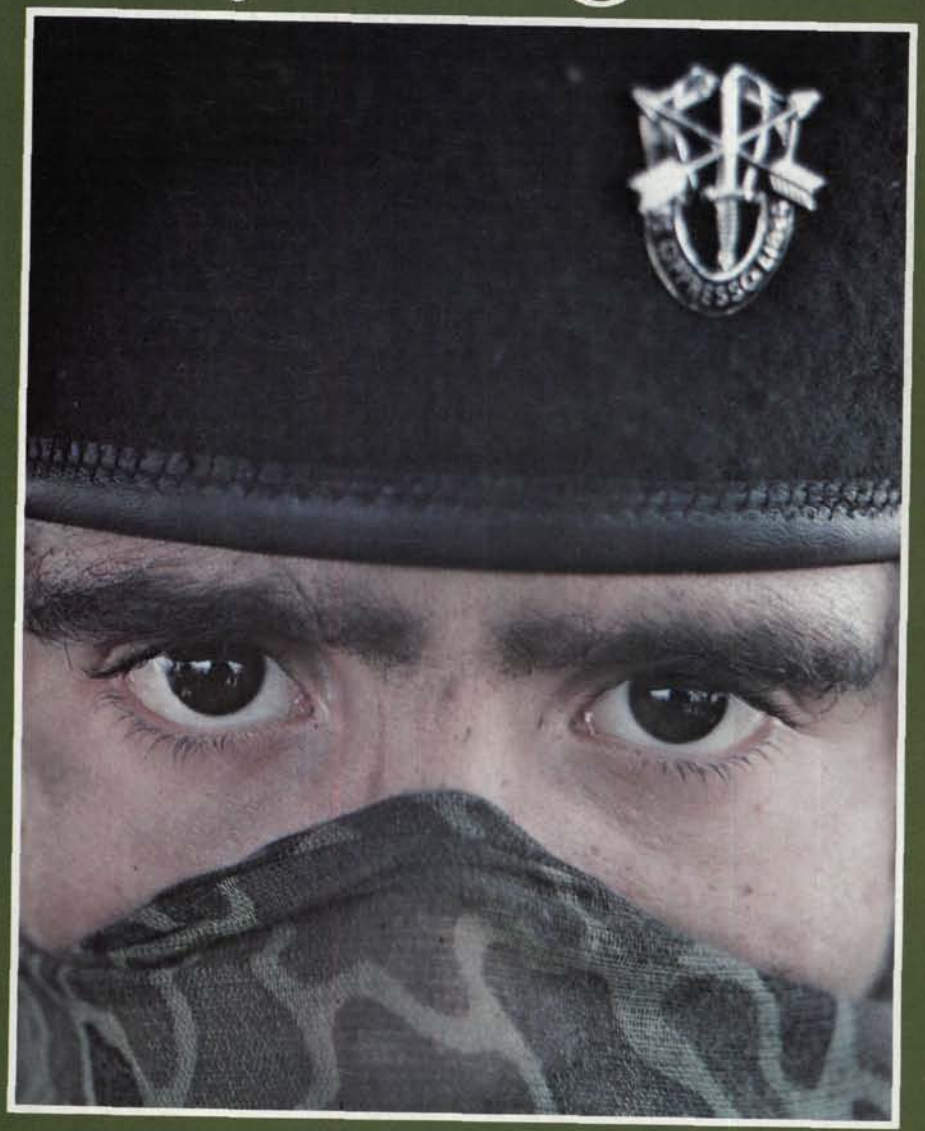

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on Reagan's Nicaraguan Options

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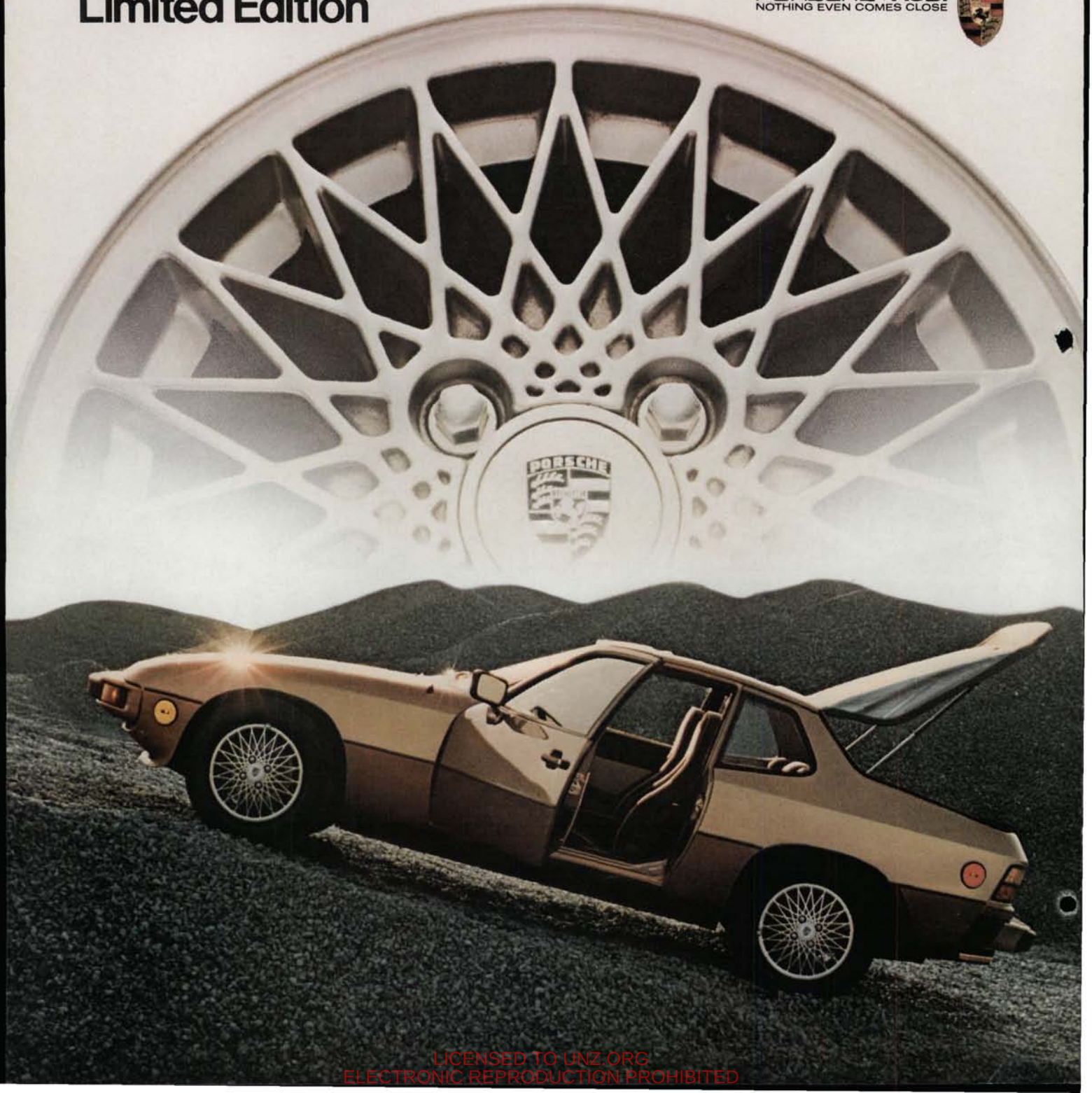

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TRB

from Washington
June 20, 1981

Time to Explain

Israel's preemptive strike against the nuclear establishment of Iraq, using American planes and military equipment, marks an appropriate time for President Reagan to come to the American people and explain his plans. Where is he going, how does he propose to get there, and how will he deal with the present situation—his first big foreign policy crisis?

So far Reagan has stressed the economy to the exclusion of almost everything else, a reasonable enough approach in view of his desire to concentrate on his bold new program of budget retrenchment and tax-cutting. But world affairs are intruding and we hardly know what the Reagan foreign policy is, except that it calls for being tough with Russia, or what his defense policy is, except that it calls for spending a great deal of money. What is the overall defense strategy? Are we preparing for what used to be called a one-and-a-half-nation war (taking on a major and a minor power simultaneously) or what on the budget now looks more like a two- or three-nation war? Reagan asks Congress to increase defense spending from $162 billion in fiscal year 1981 to $343 billion in fiscal year 1986, a gigantic leap. Can the Pentagon spend money that fast? Does it include things like the MX missile and dusted-off battleships, and will Reagan try to reduce it by going ahead with arms control negotiations with Moscow?

At this point in FDR's presidency, Roosevelt had held some 30 press conferences; Reagan has held two (with another scheduled shortly). Roosevelt had also started his fireside chats, in which he purred into the ear of every living room across the country. Reagan made an address to West Point's graduating class on May 26 which had so little content that many papers didn't bother to carry excerpts. I doubt if even Warren Harding ever managed to say so little in half an hour. ("Today you are that chain holding back an evil force that would extinguish a light we've been tending for 6,000 years" and so on.) But the international situation increasingly calls for explanations from the new administration. What line will it take with Israel, for example?

The preemptive strike adds new strands to the devil's web of nuclear dangers. The obstreperous Begin, in the midst of an election, won't yield an inch. Everything he says angers the Arabs more. And he has some strong supporters in Congress, partly from conviction, partly from interest. Israel signed a 1952 arms agreement with the US "not to undertake any act of aggression against any other state" with the weapons we sold her; Israel has not signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and has refused access to American inspectors. It generally is assumed that Israel has nuclear weapons. Now Begin says adamantly that he didn't use the US-made planes for aggression, that it was a clear act of "self-defense."

The danger transcends the present controversy, in which the United States probably will give Israel a rap on the knuckles and try to go on as before. There ought to be a world conference to try to stop the escalating nuclear threat. Are preemptive strikes going to be made a part of the warlike chain, with the world accepting the possibility of attacks between neighbors at any time? What does Reagan think? We should hear his views along with an authoritative discussion of his defense and foreign policies.

In the campaign Reagan took a sympathetic tone toward Taiwan and created a flap when he proposed putting relations on a more official basis. Now he is courting mainland China with Haig's visit this week and a push for the long delayed consular treaty that Jimmy Carter negotiated. There are many surprises in Reagan's foreign policy. He ended the grain embargo to the Soviet Union's advantage after he had harshly attacked Moscow in his January press conference as being prepared to "commit any crime; to lie, to cheat," and so on. He sent "advisers" to El Salvador after finding a Communist menace there that subsequently has faded, or at least been downplayed, in recent months. He is urging stronger nuclear armament on our allies in Europe, but European groups flirting with neutralism consider nuclear disarmament talks with the Soviets a precondition, and Reagan is refusing to commit himself to pushing the talks. According to the pro-American *Economist* of London, "the Atlantic alliance is in the early stages of what could be terminal illness." Yes, it continues, the Reagan administration has started rearmament (which it calls "essential"), but "it has not yet produced a policy which will rally the alliance around a rearmed America."

President Reagan likes to delegate authority and there has been a good deal of government-by-surrogate in Washington recently (partly due to his hospital stay). Now he is back on a full day's schedule. He has not wanted to distract congressional attention from the budget fight, knowing that a new president has only limited time to get things through the legislature and that big, bold measures generally come at first or not at all. But he can't continue to soft-pedal global affairs. He would be better served, I think, if he took his explanations directly to the public.

Take the staggering proposals for defense spending. Can the nation really get the personnel it needs for an expanded Army and Navy without a draft? Can it supply a satisfactory rationale for the MX? Can it invent the new tanks, new bombers, new fighter planes in time to spend billions on them? Will Reagan, by the way, go ahead with deliveries of AWACS to Saudi Arabia over the renewed opposition of Israel? Congress is scrambling to support the bigger defense system, but it needs reassurances from the president.

Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger is quiet, charming, and unassuming, and he fiercely accepts the Russia-out-to-rule-the-world ideology. Behind that mild exterior is the "Cap the Knife" hardness, which he applies to the Kremlin and also, one hopes, to exaggerated military dreams of generals and admirals. He has been Reagan's surrogate for months in speeches defending the big new defense budget. He is persuaded that Russia is out to undo us and outbuild us. It is hard to believe that there will be any arms limitation agreement while he is secretary. Does Reagan have any different ideas? It would be good to hear from him directly.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

June 20, 1981

No Option

> Israel understands that one of the most decisive factors in determining the future of the conflict the Arab nation is waging against it is the continued presence of the technical and scientific gap between it and the Arab nation. Therefore, it is trying by all means to keep this gap within limits which will not enable the Arab nation to achieve victory over it in the conflict.

This succinct statement of Israel's reasons for destroying Iraq's nuclear plant was issued by the government of Iraq the day after the attack. We have made one change in the text. We have used the word "Israel." Iraq did not. Unlike Jordan, for example, Iraq does not grant Israel the dignity of its own name. It calls it "the Zionist entity." Iraq has made it very clear that its quarrel with Israel is not over settlements or ideology or boundaries. It holds fast to Nasser's dictum, proclaimed a week before the 1967 war, that Israel's *existence* is an act of aggression against the Arab nation. This is not idle rhetoric. After none of the three wars Iraq has fought against Israel has it ever agreed to an armistice (not even the armistice of 1949), let alone to a treaty. Iraq rejects Security Council Resolution 242 because the resolution acknowledges Israel's right to exist. When Egypt speaks of occupied territories, it means Hebron. Iraq means Tel Aviv.

When the issue in dispute between two countries is the existence of one of them, the other has no use for negotiations and uses diplomacy only as a tactic. When the Arab summit met in Baghdad last August to discuss Jerusalem, Baghdad radio broadcast Iraq's solution: "President Saddam Hussein has stressed that a decision better than boycotting the states that move their embassies to Arab Jerusalem is to destroy Tel Aviv with bombs. He added that until the possibility of responding to the enemy with bombs becomes available, all available weapons must be used with the help of the Arab brothers."

The uniqueness of Iraq's quarrel with Israel leads to a curious asymmetry in their relations. For the last 30 years Iraq has claimed to be in a state of war with the Zionist entity. Therefore, when it sent 20,000 men and 320 tanks to Syria to join the Yom Kippur attack on Israel in 1973, it claimed to be fully within its rights as a belligerent. But when Israel struck to prevent Iraq from producing nuclear weapons, Iraq conveniently forgot its state of war with Israel. Last year Iraq entered a state of war with Iran. In September, Iranian planes tried to bomb the same nuclear plant that Israel has now leveled. The only difference between the Iranian and Israeli raids was that Iran, as usual, missed. There was no great outcry about it, from Iraq or anyone else. It was all perfectly legal because there's a war on. Some belligerents are more equal than others.

Israel, quite rightly, takes little notice of Iraq's selective applications of international law, but it does take seriously Iraq's intention to do Israel harm. After all, Israel has no conceivable territorial claim on Iraq, and yet Iraq has gone to war against Israel three times in a generation. Iraq's unhappiness with Israel's existence is clear. What Iraq has lacked has been the capacity to

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do something about it. Atomic weapons would provide just that capacity. As the foreign minister of Syria stated to ABC News several months ago, it would take only three atomic bombs to destroy Israel. And Iraq has made no bones about whom its nuclear capacity will be aimed against. Four days after September's unsuccessful Iranian attack, Iraq's official Ba'ath party organ wrote, "The Iranian people should not fear the Iraqi nuclear reactor, which is not intended to be used against Iran but against the Zionist enemy."

Faced with this threat, Israel had little choice but to take its defense into its own hands. In a surgical air strike, it destroyed the main 70-megawatt nuclear reactor near Baghdad, leaving intact a smaller neighboring reactor with no military potential.

For six years Israel had pleaded with the West not to transfer nuclear technology to Iraq. Within a year after the 1973-74 oil shocks, Jacques Chirac negotiated a deal for France by which, in return for nuclear technology, Iraq would furnish France with arms contracts worth $1.5 billion and enough oil to meet a third of her needs. France provided 93 percent enriched uranium, good enough to make Hiroshima-type bombs, even though only three percent enriched uranium is needed to generate electricity, the ostensible purpose of the Osiraq nuclear plant. Italy came cheaper. For $50 million it provided a laboratory than can be used to separate weapons-grade plutonium from spent uranium. Iraq also entered into an agreement with Brazil to barter oil for uranium.

Israel kept appealing to the West and particularly to the French to stop. The Carter administration did try to blunt France's proliferation policy. It discouraged France from two of three projected nuclear deals, one with South Korea and one with Pakistan. But it could not dissuade France from its Iraqi connection. President Carter then tried to prevail upon France at least to reduce the level of enrichment of the uranium to seven percent. France presented this proposal to Iraq; it was rejected out of hand. Iraq threatened to scuttle the entire multibillion-dollar arrangement. France decided that Iraq had more to offer than the United States—whose credibility on nonproliferation had been compromised by its continuing supply of nuclear materials to India—and proceeded with the enriched uranium shipments.

An intolerable situation was in the making. And many warnings were issued. A year ago, Winston Churchill, a British Conservative MP, wrote in the London *Times*, "A further amazing aspect of the Franco-Iraqi contract is that France is giving the Iraqis no less than three years' supply of weapons-grade uranium in advance . . . sufficient fissionable material to make three nuclear bombs." Others pointed out that Iraq's reactor was much larger than any needed for research. A year ago, Israeli deputy premier Yigal Yadin said that Israel could not tolerate the development of a nuclear weapons capability in Iraq. (A year before that, a shipment of fuel rods destined for Iraq had been sabotaged in France, an action widely attributed to Israeli secret service.) In a speech on the Senate floor three months ago, Alan Cranston of California warned that the Iraqis were pursuing a "Manhattan Project-type approach" that would give them the possibility of producing a bomb by the end of this year. "This massive Iraqi nuclear development program is under way despite the fact that Iraq has no parallel program for developing commercial nuclear power," Cranston said, and added: "In fact, I have been informed by more than one authoritative executive branch official that in the absence of any associated power program, a weapons capability is clearly the option the Iraqis are pursuing." The firing of the nuclear plant was to have begun within a few weeks. Once that had occurred, it would have become impossible to destroy the reactor without spreading massive doses of lethal radiation over the city of Baghdad. Israel struck at the last possible moment. And the reaction has been predictable.

ISRAEL'S ENEMIES have issued the ritual denunciations of Israeli aggression. In this case, however, they are more than routinely hypocritical, because states like Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Iran are all deeply threatened by Iraq's nuclear development. Hence Iran's abortive raid of its own. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states are terrified of the prospect of Iraq as a nuclear power. When the Saudis offered to finance a Pakistani bomb to the tune of $800 million, they imposed one condition: that Pakistan not transfer its nuclear technology to Iraq.

Israel's friends have been less vehement but no more honest in their criticism of Israel's action. As usual, they argued that Israel was misreading her own interests. Some played down the danger. US State Department spokesman Dean Fischer said, diplomatically, that the US doesn't share Israel's sense of immediate threat. And no wonder: the Atlantic Ocean provides a fine buffer between Baghdad and Washington. Anyway, Fischer said, Iraq would need three years to develop nuclear weapons. Even accepting his estimate, which is two and a half years longer than most experts', his point is irrelevant, because once the reactor had gone "hot" Israel couldn't have destroyed it without exterminating much of Baghdad as well. Therefore the real deadline was not three years away but three weeks or at most three months.

The French were even more emphatic. They have maintained all along that an Iraqi nuclear threat was not just remote but illusory. Hadn't Iraq signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty? And wasn't the Iraqi facility periodically inspected by the International Atomic Energy Commission? But these are ludicrously inadequate safeguards. As Francis Perrin, former chief of the French atomic energy commission, pointed out last year in opposing his country's deal with Iraq, "the treaty of nonproliferation can always be renounced"—

(continued on page 8)

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Correspondence

The psychology of English

To the editors:

I got a kick out of Leslie Fiedler's blast at English professors ("Literature as an Institution," *TNR*, May 30). Reading it was the perfect way to end the academic year. Fiedler brought back memories of my days as a "fellow traveler" and then a "hard-core" English major. Shouldn't it be "card-carrying" English major? Maybe he reserved that cliché for the longer version of his essay to describe the next stage in my development: "card-carrying MLA member."

He reminded me that ten years ago I taught "amateur therapy" in my comp classes but that I now teach "behavior modification." I thought I was teaching English, but I guess I also picked up a credential as a psychologist. When I teach lit, it turns out that I'm an unwitting ideologue who's guilty of homogenizing American culture. And when I oppose censorship but "censor" my courses by assigning books that have some arguable literary merit, I'm a hypocrite—unless sly Leslie is equivocating here in the hope that canny guys like me will catch him on this.

Among this display of buzz words I missed that overworked antithesis, hegemony versus pluralism, which decorates so many articles like Fiedler's. Maybe he included it in the longer version. But even without it, the essay is a good example of the demotic speech of the intellectually flatulent. I give it a charity C. Revise and return.

Richard Elias
Assistant Professor of English
Ohio Wesleyan University
Delaware, Ohio

Misplaced patriotism

To the editors:

In the Washington Diarist ("Memorials," *TNR*, May 23), C.K. complains of a memorial with "No mention of Vietnam, war, duty, country, sacrifice, courage, or even tragedy. . . . Its purpose is to impress upon the visitor the sheer human waste. . . ." That is a very appropriate memorial to the Vietnam War, for that is exactly what it was. And there is an appropriate message there for young people: sometimes your country can be wrong and may ask you to do something wrong. Watch out. Don't be part of the sheer human waste.

It seems strange to me that C.K. can see so clearly the threat of historical revisionism in the ridiculous but dangerous denial of the Holocaust, and yet fail to see his own sentimentalism and misplaced patriotism in trying to invent some honor out of a totally unhonorable war. Shall we have a memorial to the honor, sacrifice, and duty of the Nazi SS? This surely makes as much sense. It is important, I think, to *remember* "the sheer human waste, the utter meaningless of it all," rather than try to resurrect some honor out of it. It is important not to forget, nor to be misled, by misplaced duty, courage, and sacrifice which are in fact meaningless.

The only memorial that would reflect any honor from that period is the memorial that will never be built: the one to those people with a true sense of duty, courage, and meaningful sacrifice—those people who stood up and said, "No, this is wrong."

Sid Hall
Bozeman, Montana

Charles Krauthammer replies:

Mr. Hall is averse to honoring our Vietnam War dead because he believes that American actions in Vietnam were the equivalent of Nazi SS actions in World War II. This belief is based on either ignorance or malice. In either case I doubt that a Vietnam memorial that stood as a refutation of this analogy would do Mr. Hall any good. But it might help his children.

HEW Joe

To the editors:

Laurence E. Lynn Jr.'s review of Joseph Califano's *Governing America* is on target in identifying the major defect of the book; it is hopelessly self-serving (*TNR*, June 6). Lynn is entirely unfair, however, when he refers to "Califano's quixotic anti-smoking campaign." If Califano's modest effort to attack the chief cause of unnecessary disease and death is quixotic, then there is no hope for preventive medicine. Califano drew attention to what the US surgeon general and medical experts everywhere have concluded—that the major preventable cause of disability and mortality in all developed countries is cigarette smoking. There are more than 300,000 premature deaths annually in this country caused by smoking-related ailments, mainly coronary heart disease and lung cancer.

I handled press relations for the American Cancer Society when Califano was secretary of HEW and it was a pleasure to work with someone in government who didn't quail at every glance from a tobacco lobbyist. The modesty of the anti-smoking effort of Califano is indicated by the refusal of the administration to phase out government support for tobacco production. The Reagan administration suffers from no quixotic inclinations insofar as smoking and health are concerned. In matters of science and health it is guided by the senator from North Carolina, Jesse Helms, who has discovered when human life begins and who doesn't hesitate to curtail human life by promoting the consumption of tobacco—at taxpayers' expense.

Joseph Clark
New York, New York

To the editors:

Do you think your readers would have found it useful if you had told them that Laurence Lynn, who gave a spirited defense of Nixon's HEW in his review of Joseph Califano's book, was himself an assistant secretary of HEW during the Nixon administration?

John Jervis
Washington, DC

Benn Pal

To the editors:

Morton Kondracke has a lot of nice things to say about a party, Britain's Social Democrats ("Britain's Fledgling Party," *TNR*, May 16), that in his own words is "short of answers," begs "every question of hard policy choice," and might well "turn into a vacuous post-Fabian debating society." He cites polls indicating potential support for the SDP at the ballot box, but many of these polls are of the variety: "If you could have everything you wanted, would you take it?" (The latest polls, taken after voters had had some exposure to policy pronouncements, show SDP support dipping to ten percent.) The Labour party is chastized for taking politically marginal positions advocating British withdrawal from the Common Market, selective import controls, rejection of

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and on three months' notice. Periodic supervisory checks are no guarantee either. India also was subject to periodic checks and that did not prevent it from using its Canadian research reactor to build the "peaceful nuclear device" it exploded in 1974. And why was Iraq insisting on highly enriched uranium, which is not necessary to produce electricity but essential for producing bombs?

A slightly more sophisticated argument concedes Iraq's intention and capacity to acquire nuclear weapons but asks why it should not have the right to do so. The *New York Times* takes Israel to task for claiming a nuclear monopoly for itself. It compares Israel's attack on Iraq's reactor to agitation in America 30 years ago for a preemptive strike against the Soviet nuclear capacity and to Russia's threats against China. But these analogies don't hold. The Soviet Union has never made the abolition of the United States a foreign policy goal. And if in word and action it had declared such an intention and was prevented from carrying it out only by a lack of available means, the United States might very well have been justified in making a preemptive strike. In fact, in a much less threatening situation, the Cuban missile crisis, the United States went to the brink of world war to force the removal of nuclear weapons from a hostile neighbor. President Kennedy prepared the Air Force for a strike against nuclear installations in Cuba, and had the Soviets not backed down and withdrawn, he was ready to give the order.

The *Times* commits the further fallacy of assuming that Iraq's acquisition of nuclear weapons is solely for the purpose of deterrence. Don't the Iraqis know that to use nuclear weapons against Israel would risk retaliation? Certainly. But nuclear deterrence is based on two kinds of balance: of vulnerability and of rationality. And given Israel's tiny size and heavily concentrated population and industry, it is a far more vulnerable target for nuclear weapons than an Arab world that extends from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. Iraq would not have to be irrational, merely fanatical, to conclude that a total and permament victory might be worth a price in casualties and damage which, although high, would not be out of line with the experience of 20th-century warfare. There is no balance of vulnerability here. And as we know from the experience and behavior of the two nuclear superpowers, even a perceived imbalance, however small or theoretical, produces deep fear and large expenditure: this is the entire rationale for the MX program. As for Iraq's rationality, it is not to be depended upon in any case. Two years ago it was widely thought that oil states would never be so irrational as to bomb each other's sole means of support, their oil installations, since that would put the economies of both nations at risk. Yet the Iran-Iraq war and the large-scale destruction by each country of the other's oil installations demonstrates quite clearly how far these nations are willing to go, at the cost of their own self-interest, to pursue their national and ideological destinies.

Finally, the *Times* and others argue, Israel's attack is a precedent for other countries and thereby threatens the norms of international conduct. But it ought to be clear by now that the situation Israel faced was unique. Furthermore, reasonable nations are going to be guided by interest, not precedent; unreasonable ones do not need precedents to be unreasonable. The ayatollah, who held American diplomats hostage for 15 months; Qaddafi, who bankrolls everyone from the Red Brigades to the IRA provisionals; and Assad of Syria, who massacred 200 people in the square in Aleppo less than six months ago, do not require anyone, let alone Israel, to set them an example of international misconduct. But in one sense the Israeli strike is a precedent, and a salutory one at that. It tells the world and particularly the Western countries that if they continue their criminally irresponsible transfer of nuclear technology to unstable and aggressive regimes, countries like Israel will have to act to defend their own survival. The Israeli action once and for all took nuclear nonproliferation out of the realm of theory. As the *Guardian* of London put it: "One way to stop the spread of nuclear weapons is to ask people to sign a treaty. That has been tried. Another is to send in the air force and blow up the plant."

WHAT SHOULD Israel have done? The *Christian Science Monitor* had some advice: "If Israel had regard for international law, it could have continued working through diplomatic means to achieve an agreement on nuclear nonproliferation in the Middle East." The *Monitor* is imagining a Middle East on another planet. In the this-worldly Middle East, no one is working through diplomatic means to achieve agreement on nuclear nonproliferation. Everyone is arming. What if the assurances of these critics about Iraq's peaceful intentions are wrong? Who will guarantee Israel's security then? In the 1950s Britain, France, and the United States signed an understanding with Israel to guarantee free access through the Strait of Tiran. In May 1967, when Egypt closed the strait in violation of international law, Israel appealed for help; the guarantee was never honored. The US had given a separate and firmer assurance in 1957; in 1967 it claimed it couldn't locate the memorandum. Israel had to go to war alone. Next time, will Kurt Waldheim invoke the UN charter to prevent Iraq from attacking the Zionist entity? Even the *Christian Science Monitor* can see the problem: "What would the United States, in fact, do if Israel were threatened by a nuclear neighbor who does not recognize its right to exist?" Answer: "Here the onus falls on the international community . . . to ensure that such threats do not become a reality." Some reassurance.

The responsibility for creating the conditions that forced Israel to act lies with the West, and it is now up to the West to change those conditions. In this area, at least, the Soviets have far less to answer for. They were burned once. In the 1950s they transferred

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nuclear technology to China and now they find China's weapons pointed at Moscow. Now when they supply nuclear facilities, they keep them firmly under their own control. With the exception of China, all the actual or potential nuclear weapons states of the third world have had Western help. There is an obscene race among Western powers to give unstable states the means to blow each other up and possibly us, too. In the West, unrestricted competition for oil and arms contracts has produced a shortsighted competition to sell not only conventional weapons but also nuclear technology to the oil states. Israel's act has pointed out what is obvious, that the nonproliferation emperor wears no clothes. The Western states use each other as alibis: if one doesn't snap up the contract, another will. Most of the countries conducting this ugly traffic are members of NATO; the exceptions, like Switzerland and Brazil, would be susceptible to persuasion if the others determined to unite in calling a halt. France would be a logical leader of such an effort. The French were more responsible than anybody else for the Iraqi threat, and their new government, which contains many figures who campaigned against the original deal with Iraq, is in a position to suggest something fresh. President Reagan, too, would do well to seize the opportunity to pull the West together to put a stop to the insane dominion of short-term economic advantage over medium-term nuclear survival. It must be said that, given the prevailing reverence for the market and the prevailing disdain for arms control, such a reversal seems highly unlikely. Under the circumstances, it is easy to see why Israel found it more prudent to call on its air force.

On the Hill

Compromising Positions

Reacting to complaints that his tax cut proposal is too generous to the affluent, President Reagan has unveiled a revised version that gives a whole new meaning to the word "compromise." Among its new concessions to liberal sentiment: poor people would be able to leave estates of up to $600,000 without paying inheritance taxes; the unemployed could give $10,000 a year to each of their children without worrying about gift taxes; welfare mothers would save $2,500 on their oil windfall profits tax; blue-collar workers living abroad could earn up to $75,000 a year tax-free; and blacks earning over $60,000 a year would get a tax break on their investment portfolios. These and other "sweeteners" may tempt enough Democrats to support Reagan's plan to give him a majority in the House of Representatives. Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill accused the president of "stealing goodies" from the Democrats' own alternative tax plan. This gives you a pretty clear picture of political attitudes on Capitol Hill these days. Liberal citizens can only hope that the Democrats will come to terms before Reagan threatens to compromise further.

There have been three general criticisms of Reagan's tax cut proposal, one dubious and two valid. The dubious charge is that cutting people's taxes will spur inflation by overstimulating demand. The Reaganites argue, with much justice, that their proposed personal tax cut would merely prevent an unlegislated tax *increase* through inflationary "bracket creep," leaving taxpayers on average about where they started. No added stimulus there. What *will* cause inflation is Reagan's huge proposed increase in the defense budget, if he refuses to pay for it with a tax increase and fails (as he will) to cut an equal amount from domestic programs. In any event, the Democrats have now lost inflation as an argument against Reagan's plan, since the revised version of Reagan's plan would cost less next year than the alternative the Democrats are offering. Both sides now propose starting with a five percent personal tax cut in 1982, but the Democrats have added more costly ornaments.

The second criticism of Reagan's cut is that it is unfair. Despite the handsome symmetry of across-the-board reductions, this is perfectly true. Inflation has pushed people into higher tax brackets, but Reagan's plan doesn't adjust the brackets—it adjusts the rates in each bracket. Those well into the highest bracket suffer the least from "bracket creep," but get the biggest reduction. Inflation also has eroded the value of the standard and personal deductions, which have a much greater effect on the taxes of lower-income people, but Reagan proposes no adjustment in these. The benefit of Reagan's tax cuts for businesses also will go disproportionately to the better off. So if the *average* taxpayer would break even after Reagan's original three-year plan, this is because those richer than average would do better while those poorer than average would do worse.

The latest "concessions" to win Democratic support would make Reagan's design even more unfair. Raising the inheritance tax exemption from $175,000 to $600,000 is intended to appeal to small businessmen and small farmers. "Small" is one of the most frequently misapplied words in politics, and these figures should help put it in perspective. Raising the annual gift tax exemption from $3,000 to $10,000 means that a wealthy couple with two children can pass on $40,000 a year tax-free, thus further reducing their estate taxes when they die. High-bracket taxpayers also can reduce the income tax on their investment profits by "giving" these investments to young children with no other income. An investment adviser told the *Wall Street Journal* last week that Reagan's proposed gift tax change opens up "the best tax shelter available to individuals."

The Democrats were the first to propose an imme-

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diate reduction of the top tax rate from 70 percent to 50 percent. Reagan, who originally wanted to phase in this reduction over three years, has matched their offer. The top tax on wage income has been 50 percent since 1969, and it is often said to be unfair that investment profits can be taxed up to 70 percent. No one worried about that when the wage tax ceiling was imposed in 1969, and no one is proposing now to eliminate the unfairness by undoing that favor for the affluent, rather than by adding a new one. A 50-percent top tax rate on all income would not be unreasonable if it really meant 50 percent. But capital gains are three-fifths deductible, meaning that the top tax on this kind of income will be 20 percent. Any family wage-earner making more than $11,900 pays a higher marginal rate than that, but no one seems to find this disparity unfair.

The third and most devastating charge against Reagan's design is false labeling. It isn't a "supply-side" tax cut at all, if that means one designed for the biggest "feedback" in increased investment and productivity. Saving will continue to be a losing proposition and consumer borrowing will continue to be subsidized since the tax rules aren't indexed for inflation. Under these circumstances, modest general reductions in personal tax rates aren't going to generate much new investment capital. The lower taxes on investment income of the rich, and the new rules for business depreciation, also don't distinguish between productive investments, unproductive speculation, and tax shelters. The revised plan does correct the worst aspects of the original depreciation scheme, which would have provided negative tax rates (that is, the government pays you) on profits from some buildings, while offering no encouragement at all for the most promising high-technology equipment.

In light of all this, what on earth do congressional Democrats think they are doing? They act as if they feel obliged to oppose Reagan's plan without any clear idea why. They have made the most noise insisting on two years of cuts instead of three. This is hardly a dispute on principle. The Democrats do propose very modest increases in the basic deductions that affect low-income taxpayers. But otherwise, their main concern does seem to be what Speaker O'Neill calls "goodies": a reduction in the marriage penalty, higher ceilings on tax-free retirement savings, and so on.

The Democrats are missing a real opportunity to call Reagan's bluff. The opportunity comes from, of all people, William E. Simon, the right-wing financial guru, in a pamphlet issued this month by, of all places, the American Enterprise Institute, the conservative think tank. In *Reforming the Income Tax System*, Simon offers a plan that would make the tax code both fairer and friendlier to productive investment. It is virtually identical to a scheme proposed last year by *The New Republic* ("Saving Capitalism From Its Friends," *TNR*, 1980). The key is that after eliminating all the special rules that encrust the tax code, and by adjusting it to the reality of inflation, much lower tax rates could produce the same amount of revenue. "The many complex tax concessions for investment in the existing system could be replaced by a tax system that simply *does not discourage* investment," Simon writes. Today's tax code not only discourages investment but also irrationally discriminates between different kinds of investment.

Simon is honest enough to say that he opposes a progressive tax code—one that redistributes income along with raising revenue—on principle. But he's practical enough to offer a plan that would be about as progressive as our present Rube Goldberg arrangement. As Simon says, "our current tax system redistributes precious little income" anyway. Today we have the worst of both worlds: high marginal rates that throttle the economy, and little actual tax justice.

The Democrats say they are looking for "bold new ideas." If they were to propose a version of Simon's plan as an alternative to the Reagan tax package, conservative Republicans would either have to accept it or be awfully embarrassed. Either result would be a political triumph. Instead, by accepting the gist of Reagan's scheme, while staging a symbolic and probably futile opposition, they are arranging their own humiliation.

Michael Kinsley

A Fool and His Money

Slots and Suds

CEOs, as Wall Street likes to call the corporate bosses or chief executive officers, are a long-lived bunch on the whole. Unless the corporate jet slams into a mountain, those boys make damn sure they live long enough to enjoy their princely retirement annuities. This undoubtedly was the expectation of Roger Wheeler, CEO of Telex, Inc. (last year's sales: $190 million), when he went for his ritual Wednesday afternoon round of golf. But it was not to be. As the electronics executive was sitting in his car after the 18th hole, his career and his ten-stroke handicap were both ended by a gunshot fired by a person or persons unknown. The business press has been hinting that Wheeler's career was terminated short of retirement by organized crime. The motives are murky but the fact always mentioned is that he was the owner of World Jai-Alai, Inc., a company that runs a chain of frontons, the places where this much bet-upon game with a ball and wicker basket is played. We'll leave the investigative reporters to discover whether or not this Presbyterian businessman tripped over the line between organized crime and organized business. For us the question is gambling on gambling. How good a bet is it?

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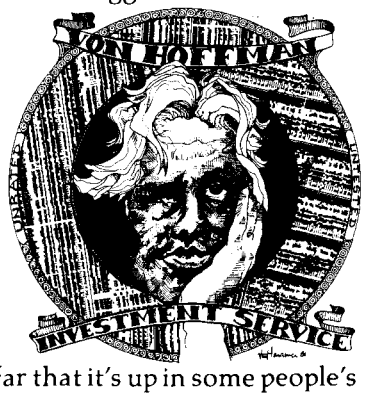
World Jai-Alai is supposed to be, in the overworld argot of the stockbrokers, a regular cash cow, a money milker that sluices gold into the bank accounts of its proprietors. Since Wheeler was the sole owner, the best person in a position to say isn't in such a good position anymore.

Generally those who gamble on gambling should brace themselves for sudden, unexpected shocks, if not necessarily loud noises. It is always a crap shoot, and where the dice roll there can be big winners. If, in 1972, you'd bought a share of Bally Manufacturing, a company that makes slot machines, pinballs, and those astral-sounding video games, and owns most of the Atlantic City's Park Place casino, you'd be doing OK by now. The price was around $18, as it has been this year, but thanks to three stock splits your one share would have multiplied into eight shares. (Instead of increasing the dividend companies occasionally give their shareholders extra stock, called splits. It helps save on income taxes.) If you had been a real shrewdy and had known enough to sell out two years ago when Bally stock was at its height, you'd have walked away with $388 for your original $18 investment. But if you were that smart you wouldn't be reading the Fool.

Now you'd have to be a fool to buy Bally. Business isn't booming anymore, and not long ago the company's president was forced to resign by the New Jersey Casino Control Commission. That's the gambling business. Always some kind of *deus ex machina* upsetting things. Even Playboy Enterprises, a far more sedate outfit than most in the gambling business, has seen its own cash cow, an English casino operation, come up with an unforeseen dry udder. Out of the blue it has been hit with huge tax increases, and since its gambling operations have been contributing more to the bottom line than *Playboy* and the recently sold *Oui*, this bodes ill for a stock that has been paying a dividend of about one percent of its purchase price.

THERE ARE other leisure-time activities to put your money in and none is more appropriate to the hot-weather season than beer, which you can invest in as well as drink. Do sip slowly, however, for this is a highly competitive industry in which great labels can have the most terrible things happen to them faster than you can say chug-a-lug. The nightmare that overtook Schlitz, the beer that came close to making Milwaukee infamous, is proof of that. Nothing that transpired at Chrysler was worse from a business point of view. From 1974 to 1980 Schlitz lost both its once-renowed gusto and almost six out of every ten customers it had when it was America's number two brewer and hot after first place—occupied then and now by Anheuser-Busch. Among Schlitz's problems were the flakes that formed in the beer after a change was made in the brewing formula. Then came complaints that the beer didn't taste good anymore. Next were endless marketing and advertising problems, until today industry observers are guessing that the management welcomed a recent strike in the Milwaukee brewery as an opportunity to close down unneeded production.

The troubles at Schlitz are most frequently attributed to hereditary control by the Uilhein family, which couldn't provide or recruit the talent needed to safeguard this once marvelous property. Incidentally, similar thoughts might be mumbled about the Coors brewing family. Coors has been doing so poorly in the beer business of late it has been suggested that some of the members of the family ought to get back on the company plane, cease orating about private enterprise, and go practice it. Right now the only reason for buying Coors stock is for its somewhat debatable gas and oil properties. Schlitz, on the other hand, has gone down so far that it's up in some people's estimation. A share that sold for nearly $70 in 1973 can be had this year in the seven- to ten-dollar range. It is estimated that if the company were sold at auction it would be worth more than that to the stockholders. Schlitz is virtually debt free, has cash in the till, and owns breweries that it could sell to other companies at good prices. For these reasons a few people are buying the stock. They figure either Schlitz will be dismembered and sold off piece by piece or it will be bought by another company. Either way the stock should increase in value, but it's a gamble fit for people who have chips to spare.



The moral of the Schlitz story is don't buy a beer stock until you've had a can of the beer, and if you do you'll want to look into Anheuser-Busch. This family-controlled company got a scare a few years ago when the Philip Morris company bought Miller Beer and introduced cigarette-marketing strategy to the industry. For a while it looked as if it might be Miller time in the marketplace, but A-B rallied, held its customers, and went on growing. At about $35 a share, A-B is a rational bet to go up in price and the beer business is a reasonable thing to put your money in, particularly if you're a downcast liberal who doesn't believe in Reaganomics.

In any event, you can make money even in a declining industry if you have the right management. This would be one very good reason to look into the G. Heileman Brewing company of La Crosse, Wisconsin. Their stock, somewhere in the mid-20s, is recommended because they have made a specialty of buying up distressed breweries and turning them around with good management. Among their labels are Carling, Colt 45, Special Export, and Blatz.

Heileman is a fair-sized firm but you don't need to be big to make a lot of money—or at least enough to send regular contributions to the ADA or the ACLU.

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Nick's Picks . . . Bart's Charts

Nearly one year ago "Nick's Picks . . . Bart's Charts" was inaugurated in order to hold the accompanying column, A Fool and His Money, to a standard above and beyond that of the other commentary that fills the pages of *The New Republic*—that is, to measure its advice objectively by real-world standards. We've been making mythical investments for 50 weeks. This is an opportune time to take stock, so to speak, and review the thrills of capital gains and the agony of bankruptcy we have experienced vicariously the past year.

The Fool Fund got off to a quick start, increasing in value over 35 percent in its first six weeks due to the spectacular performance of our hypothetical investment in pork bellies futures. By November, our pork holdings had gone up almost 600 percent, carrying the fund to its high point thus far of almost $1.6 million. Rather than cashing in on a sure thing, we held onto the pigs and paid the price. The pigs plummeted and we ended up netting only $200,000. But this still made it our most successful investment and we got out none too soon, as one month later our investment would have been wiped out. That is precisely what happened to our holdings in live cattle futures. In December we lost our $98,600 investment, which erased the Fool Fund's previous gains. The fund muddled through the winter, bottoming out in March, when we were down 2.2 percent overall.

Our stock and bond holdings have not been nearly as volatile as our commodity futures. The big losers so far have been Beatrice Foods bonds, MONY Mortgage investors, and Gulf Oil, each down about 25 percent. MONY and Gulf hit new lows this month, but Beatrice looks as if it is finally rebounding, following a general upsurge in the depressed bond market which also carried Chrysler to its highest point since last October. Our biggest gainers are Thomas Nelson Publishers (which we sold for a 50 percent profit), Nucor Steel (up 34 percent), and Kinder-Care Learning Centers (up 19 percent). Both Nucor and Kinder-Care reached new highs this month.

Dreyfus Liquid Assets, our money market fund, has paid us an average 13.1 percent interest since last June, ranging from an initial low of eight percent to 16.9 percent in February. Since January, it has averaged 15.7 percent and in the last week it has moved back up to 16.6 percent.

So, how are we doing? The Fool Fund has inched up to show a 9.7 percent gain, our highest level since December's cattle crash, and in doing so we have pulled slightly ahead of the inflation rate. The Consumer Price Index has risen 9.5 percent in the last 50 weeks. The Dow Jones Industrial Average is up 13.8 percent, although almost half of this increase came in the first month of this exercise. Our 9.7 percent increase probably won't enable us to go into the investment newsletter business. But it is not too bad for so-called fools.

For round 12, we have deposited hypothetical dividend checks from Gulf and Nucor into Dreyfus Liquid Assets which, with this period's interest, gives us $155,222. This month's selection is Anheuser-Busch. At $38⅞ a share, we can buy 2,500 shares costing us $97,188 with $972 (one percent) going to our broker.

After 50 weeks, our portfolio looks like this:

	May 11	June 9
93 Beatrice Foods bonds	$ 69,983	$ 74,749
156 Chrysler Financial Corp. bonds	86,580	98,475
140 Resorts International bonds	84,350	88,375
11,250 shares MONY Mortgage	78,750	75,938
1,640 shares Nucor	121,360	133,250
11,778 shares Templeton Growth Fund	93,282	92,575
2,250 shares Gulf Oil	74,813	73,969
95 fresh broiler futures on margin	107,825	86,450
7,400 shares Kinder-Care	100,825	119,325
2,800 shares Harte-Hanks	99,750	99,400
2,500 shares Anheuser-Busch		97,188
Dreyfus Liquid Assets	147,714	57,062
TOTAL	$1,065,232	**$1,096,756**

The score so far (since June 20, 1980):

Consumer Price Index (estimated)	+ 9.5 percent
Dow Jones Industrial Average	+13.8 percent
TNR's Fool Fund	+ 9.7 percent

Bart Rubenstein

Bart Rubenstein is general manager of *Channels* magazine.

Although small regional brewers have had a catastrophic time of late, there are exceptions. One is Pittsburgh Brewing, the makers of Iron City and I.C. Light. Besides making beer that a lot of people like the taste of, Iron City has done well by building community loyalty without a big advertising budget. That's the kind of thing that can lead to a highly desirable condition—big revenues and low costs.

Beer has a history of being more or less recession-proof. In good times and bad, the business grows, not spectacularly but steadily. It is also an industry that has been through galvanic change in the last 15 years. In 1965 the six biggest beer companies sold 37 percent of the suds guzzled every year; by last year the top six were selling 84 percent, thanks to struggle and change brought on by the disasters at Schlitz and Philip Morris's new marketing and advertising approaches. Some of the great names in this industry, whose trademarks are as cherished as railroad insignia, are in deep trouble. Companies such as Pabst and Olympia, as well as Coors, have highly uncertain futures.

But what is the future of beer in a white wine epoch? Beer has to contend with an image hardly better than cigars. In these thin-obsessed times, expressions like beer gut and beer belly are hardly helpful. Moreover, the number of people in what has been the prime consumption age group, 18-24, isn't growing. When investing, it's important to keep an eye not only on how society is changing but also on whether somebody is working at changing social attitudes. The beer industry is. Unlike the cigar folks, beer promoters are working on a new pitch. Advertising like Michelob's suggests that beer isn't the burp-inducing beverage of beef-chested, button-popping, blue-collar work-

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ers but the cooling refreshment of suave young professionals.

The truly exciting appreciations, though—the kind that take the ten-dollar stock and run it up to $45—are not ordinarily to be found in mature industries such as beer. For that you have to go looking for the new and different and the risky, which is where the Fool puts Scientific Radio Systems, Inc. This company started about 12 years ago with the idea of converting existing, advanced technological ideas into sound, reliable, commercially attractive products in the broadcasting field.

It has been doing very well with its radio-telephones, which are used by governments and businesses around the globe where ordinary communications are primitive or non-existent. Now SRS has a new product, Meteor Burst Communication. "Meteor Burst bounces signals off the ionized trail left by meteors entering the earth's atmosphere about 60 miles or so above the earth," explains SRS's vice president, Neal Garman. "There are literally billions of meteors—most no bigger than your fingernail—entering the atmosphere each day with only an extremely few that don't burn up within seconds."

In other words, these meteor trails serve as a substitute for multimillion-dollar satellites, which not only can wear out but can vanish before they can send out a single beep, as happened to one sent up by RCA a year or so ago. It costs only $60,000 to set up an SRS media-burst communication system capable of sending and receiving messages from two points on earth 1,200 miles apart. Twice that figure would give a big corporation its own private transcontinental hookup.

Fool's Gold: The drop in the rate of inflation isn't supply-side propaganda. In fact you can thank policies initiated by non-person J. Carter for the dip, which ought to continue the rest of the year. However, lower inflation isn't the same as no inflation and, in any case, don't count on interest rates going down. We'll know what they're going to do as soon as they do it.

Nicholas von Hoffman

More than caucuses, but not yet a cause.

Democrats in Denver

Denver

It may have been the clear mountain air, the tornadoes, or just the shock of getting out of Washington, but there were indications at the Democratic National Committee meeting here two weeks ago that the Democratic party had rediscovered reality. Let no one read too much into this. Rediscovering reality is not the same thing as dealing with it intelligently, merely the necessary condition. Still, for the first time in nearly a decade the party's state chairmen and National Committee members were more interested in Social Security, air pollution, and tax rates than in proxy rights, delegate selection rules, and how many members of various minority groups were in the room.

This transformation became clear when the Democratic National Committee approved, with only pro forma opposition, a plan to reduce the size and shape of the 1982 Midterm Party Conference. Most of those who did not think the change was a very good idea finally were struck with the revelation that the whole matter was not very important. "I voted for one of the amendments [to the proposed change]," said Stephen H. Smith, a young and liberal committee member from California, "but then I voted for the main motion because it really doesn't make much difference." And Lanny Davis, once a Maryland congressional candidate and a former new politics activist, said he supported the change simply because "I'm sick and tired of fighting over process."

Such an attitude, which would have been deemed rank reaction by these same liberals just a few years ago, could mark a major turning point. It is conceivable that the various factions of the Democratic party will begin to regard themselves first as Democrats and only second as part of some separate political subculture. But on Wednesday, June 3, when DNC leaders and tornadoes both appeared here for the first time in many years, it became clear that this is not yet wholly the case. The tornadoes injured 60 persons and destroyed 300 buildings, but amazingly killed no one, cleared away Denver's famed air pollution for a few days, and gave the Democrats something to talk about. The political news that day was that the Democrats had just nominated for a special congressional race a candidate who was intelligent, moderate, and perhaps even electable in a Republican district, but to whom the Democratic National Committee could give neither a nickel nor a word of advice. The candidate, Dale Locker, had voted in the Ohio legislature against ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. In Ohio's fourth congressional district this is a political necessity; in the Democratic party it is a political crime. The convention resolved last summer to give no support to any such candidate, even if his opponent had the same view on ERA and substantially different views on everything else. One day, even at a Democratic meeting, someone will have the courage to stand up and acknowledge that there will be no Equal Rights Amendment. This conclusion may be successfully regretted but not successfully denied. Until then, the Democrats' Women's Caucus will maintain its tyranny over the rest of the party.

It is not the only one. The Democrats are so constituted that not only must they have a black vice chairman but the black vice chair must be chosen by the blacks. In February the DNC met to elect Charles Manatt as its new chairman and to reelect, everyone

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thought, Detroit mayor Coleman Young as the black vice chairman. But Gary, Indiana, mayor Richard Hatcher staged a successful coup inside the party's black caucus, and Young, who could have beaten Hatcher easily in full committee, stepped aside.

Still, the Denver meeting may have marked the beginning of the end of King Caucus. The old fervor was gone. The Women's Caucus met and dutifully re-pledged itself to ERA ratification. The blacks opened up their previously closed caucus and struck a blow for racial equality by revealing that blacks have boring meetings too. Somebody even gave a caucus to which nobody came. Dick Hanson, a 31-year-old Minnesotan, got a meeting room and official sanction to hold a meeting of the Gay-Lesbian Caucus. He was the only caucuser who showed up.

This left the Liberal-Progressive Caucus, which held a meeting to protest the changes in the Midterm Conference. But their hearts weren't in it. Neither were those of their allies—blacks, Hispanics, women, and labor members—most of whom had agreed to the scaled-down conference. Michael Harrington had written an angry statement attacking the changes, but when he did not show up to lead the fight, the liberals just went through the motions. Under the new plan, each state will send to the conference (probably next spring in Philadelphia) its DNC delegation plus a number equal to that delegation, and the national leaders will choose 100 at-large members. These 900 or so people will comprise more of a party leadership conference than the constituent assembly formed by 1,663 delegates in Memphis in 1978.

Manatt tried to deny that the change meant less grassroots participation in the party. He would have been better off noting that the 372-member DNC is itself a constituent assembly of the nation's Democrats, but saying the right thing in as few words as possible is not his strong suit. The 45-year-old California lawyer is not doing very well at the public relations half of his job (and it is half the job). He is doing very well indeed ("indeed" is his favorite word) at the other half. He has put together a first-rate staff headed by Eugene Eidenberg, who ran the highly efficient intergovernmental liaison operation in the Carter White House, and Ann Lewis, once a congressional aide and always a shrewd political operative. Manatt also has introduced some organization and efficiency to the national committee, which had been left in a bedraggled state by Jimmy Carter and his chosen factotum, John White. The Democrats are even starting to raise some money. Not as much as Republicans, to be sure, because the Democrats are still relying on the big contributors. But they have signed on with the direct-mail firm of Craver, Mathews, Smith & Company to try to get money from the many rather than just the few.

ALL THIS eventually may permit the Democrats to deal with their real problem, which is figuring out what they are and where they ought to go. Sounding very much like a presidential candidate, Colorado senator Gary Hart made the only real speech of the meeting, calling for the Democrats to produce policies that are "fiscally responsible and morally responsible at the same time." Hart, to be sure, has been talking this way for years without specifying those policies, but the Democrats liked what he had to say anyway.

Partially liberated from their internal bickering, the Democrats were able to spend some time condemning the policies of the Reagan administration. They passed resolutions criticizing Reagan for wanting to sell AWACS to the Saudis and to cut back on Social Security benefits to the elderly. They cheered when Manatt called for the rejection of Ernest Lefever's nomination (on the very day Lefever withdrew) and for the resignation of Secretary of the Interior James Watt.

And they had a good time all the while. An unorthodox but plausible interpretation of recent political history attributes the Republican comeback not to the rise of the new right or the writing of the Kemp-Roth bill but to the revelation that the Republicans had started having more fun. That became clear at the July 1978 Republican National Committee meeting in Detroit. There the leaders of the Grand Old Party danced until dawn, drank impressive amounts of liquor, flirted with much style and few inhibitions, and, on a boat ride up and down the Detroit River, even inhaled the fumes of a controlled substance. Democrats at this point were discussing rather than engaging in interpersonal relationships, and had degenerated to the point of regarding white wine and soda as an acceptable drink for an American politician.

Now, in Denver, a very liberal and very proper leader of the Democratic National Committee was riding up the escalator to the Hilton Hotel lobby expressing what should have been obvious: "There's only one way to get through a DNC meeting—drunk." The next night this same liberal, some of the senior staff, a few elected officials from here and there, and a

Happy Anniversary

Richard Strout, *The New Republic*'s TRB since 1943, celebrated a mind-boggling anniversary on June 13: his 60th year on the staff of the *Christian Science Monitor*. His colleagues at *TNR* wish him and the *Monitor* many happy returns.

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couple of reporters hit a local night spot south of town. There they danced to raucous music. They showed every sign of noticing gender differences in obvious disregard of party rules. They drank gin and Scotch and good Mexican beer. There is some possibility that a generation of Republican rule is not at hand after all.

Jon Margolis

Jon Margolis is the Washington-based national political correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*.

Regulation on the honor system.

Broyhill's Brainchild

Deregulation often means putting money into the hands of businessmen, and it isn't surprising that in the current mania for loosening government controls, some folks have become greedy. In recent weeks, with help from groups like the furniture industry, the Reagan administration and its friends in Congress have zeroed in on the Consumer Product Safety Commission. The administration strongly favored abolition of the agency. When that proved unsuccessful, Representative Phil Gramm, Reagan's tame conservative Democrat, tried to get the CPSC incorporated into the Commerce Department. That failed, too, at least for the moment. Finally, James Broyhill, Republican of North Carolina, came up with an amendment to the CPSC's reauthorization bill. The Broyhill amendment would put the real authority for regulation of industry safety codes in the hands of the industries themselves and could effectively dismantle state safety regulations.

Broyhill's amendment is an embellishment upon a milder CPSC reform proposal which seems to have overwhelming support in both the House and the Senate. That proposal would encourage the CPSC to adopt as federal regulations voluntary product safety codes proposed by industry. It would make it more difficult for the CPSC to create safety standards on its own—standards that industry might think were too tough. Broyhill's amendment would further reduce the CPSC's power to impose compulsory regulations and pressure the agency officially to sanction industry-sponsored safety codes. It would give the CPSC power, after adopting a voluntary industry code as an official federal regulation, to override any state safety laws or rules. The Broyhill amendment's supporters argue that CPSC compulsory product safety regulations already supersede state laws, and question why a regulation developed cooperatively by CPSC and industry shouldn't carry equal weight. Its critics claim it is unconstitutional.

Unlike Representative Gramm's proposal to drown the CPSC in Commerce, the Broyhill amendment was approved by Henry Waxman's health subcommittee on a voice vote, with no recorded opposition. But the CPSC authorization bill is now stalled, as the agency's supporters, such as Waxman and, reportedly, House Energy and Commerce Committee chairman John Dingell, ponder whether they have the votes to defeat conservative proposals for radical surgery on the agency. In the meantime some congressional liberals and state government lobbyists are quietly organizing a move to dump the Broyhill amendment when the CPSC bill starts to move again. These opponents say that it is a dramatic and unwarranted abrogation of states' rights. This is one argument the supporters of the amendment may have trouble countering, given the Reagan administration's views on such matters.

But there are other arguments against the Broyhill amendment that may cast doubt on its deregulatory value. A 1978 Federal Trade Commission staff study discussed the negative effects of industry self-regulation. The 600-page report, entitled "Standards and Certification," examined the activities of private product safety code organizations like Underwriters Laboratories and the American Society for Testing Materials. The FTC staff suggested that although voluntary product safety codes sometimes do lead to safer products,

> despite these benefits, standards development and certification activities have frequently caused or contributed to substantial consumer and competitive injuries. The injuries include denying consumers the benefits of superior or lower cost technology, denying business the opportunity to enter and compete in profitable industries, inadequate product safety levels, inflated product prices. . . .

The FTC goes on to suggest that private organizations responsible for safety code standards are also sometimes "manipulated by large established firms at the expense of consumers, small firms, new entrants and others." The Broyhill amendment in effect proposes that private industry groups like these and even ad hoc groups set up to regulate industries internally, rather than the CPSC or the states, be responsible for writing safety code regulations.

Then arises the matter of the furniture industry's enthusiastic support of the Broyhill amendment. Broyhill's aide Nancy Nord confirmed to me that one of the most powerful furniture industry groups, the Southern Furniture Manufacturers Association, had been "very supportive" of the Broyhill amendment, though she insisted also, "This is not a furniture amendment." Joe Gerard, a lobbyist for both the Southern Furniture Manufacturers and the National Furniture Manufacturers Association, told me that his groups "worked with Representative Broyhill as did other organizations in developing the language of the [amendment]." He, too, added that the Broyhill amendment was mainly the idea of the congressman himself: "Representative Broyhill is a man who keeps his own counsel."

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But the furniture industry's support for the amendment is manifest, and the industry will have something to gain if the amendment becomes law—namely the possible overriding of tough California state regulations that have been an irritant since they were established. In 1975 the state of California, alarmed at reports that 1,600 Americans a year were dying in furniture fires, issued a regulation requiring all furniture sold in the state to pass a fire resistance test involving an open flame. In 1977 California asked the CPSC to adopt the state regulation as compulsory federal safety rule. The CPSC ran its own scientific tests and some staffers believed a tough federal regulation was needed. However, the furniture industry protested that any compulsory regulation would be costly to them and to the public, and that the California regulation would be particularly bad for business if adopted on a national scale. As a compromise, the CPSC accepted a proposal from an ad hoc industry standards group, the Upholstered Furniture Action Council. The UFAC proposed a one-year test program in which manufacturers voluntarily built furniture that passed a cigarette ignition test but not California's open flame test.

THE INDUSTRY was jubilant when CPSC first agreed to this scheme. But manufacturers became defensive when spot-check results from the first six months of the UFAC code experiment were tabulated. These showed that of 39 chairs built to UFAC's voluntary product safety guidelines, 28 caught fire in the CPSC's cigarette ignition test. (The CPSC also visited 156 furniture stores around the country and found that only 22 percent of the merchandise on display carried UFAC flame resistance labels). When CPSC officials revived talk about compulsory furniture regulations, the industry became truculent. UFAC staged a press conference at which Representative Steve Neal, Democrat of North Carolina, announced: "If the Consumer Product Safety Commission attempts to impose such mandatory standards or others that are unreasonable in a free society, the immediate result would be a challenge in the courts by the furniture industry, and I and others in the Congress would work as hard as possible to find a way to stop it. I believe that we would succeed." This warning apparently had its effect on the CPSC. The staff is now recommending that UFAC voluntary flammability standards be extended for another year.

Broyhill aide Nancy Nord insists that the Broyhill amendment would not necessarily allow the furniture industry to circumvent the regulatory threat it perceives from both the CPSC and the state of California. But California Home Furnishings Bureau officials were alarmed enough to tell the trade press two weeks ago they intend to test the Broyhill amendment's constitutionality in court if it receives congressional approval. Furthermore, an uncomfortable intimacy between Broyhill and the furniture industry has been reported. Broyhill's press spokesman acknowledges that, until last October, Broyhill's family owned Broyhill Industries, one of the largest US furniture manufacturers. The spokesman also confirms that Representative Broyhill worked for the company before entering Congress in 1962, and continued to hold stock in it until its sale to Interco, a shoe company, last year. Broyhill's spokesman confirmed that William Stevens, co-chairman of UFAC until last March, is Broyhill's brother-in-law, and that Broyhill's district contains two large furniture-producing towns, Hickory and Lenoir.

According to House Energy and Commerce Committee officials, the administration has not yet expressed support for the Broyhill amendment, despite its affinity for Representatives Gramm and Broyhill. Broyhill reportedly was telephoned by Vice President Bush to discuss other aspects of the CPSC debate. So far there has been little resistance to the administration's postulate that the public interest, as well as the businessman, profits directly from deregulation. But the administration may sense that the public could become disenchanted with deregulation if businessmen, working with their favorite sons in Congress, start promoting parochial visions of deregulatory Nirvana. Then, again, the administration may eventually decide to support the Broyhill amendment. After all, even without compulsory federal flammability rules, sofas are undoubtedly safer than guns.

Mark Hosenball

Mark Hosenball is a reporter for the Washington bureau of *Women's Wear Daily*.

How you and Union Carbide
came to agree.

The Art of Polling

> Some experts say that there are 50,000 toxic and poisonous chemical waste sites around the country that pose serious health and safety threats to the public. Other experts say that . . . only a few of these sites pose a risk to the public. . . . In general, which view is closer to your own?

At a time when the ignorance of Americans and the failure of our education system are celebrated throughout the land, it is encouraging to report that, according to a recent poll, only 23 percent of the American people "don't know" how many dangerous toxic waste sites there are in the country. Of the rest, 52 percent know that there are 50,000 such sites, and 25 percent know that there are hardly any.

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This poll was financed by Union Carbide Corporation and conducted by Cambridge Reports, Inc., a company founded by Patrick Caddell, the political pollster who helped make George McGovern and Jimmy Carter what they are today. You might think that Union Carbide, as the nation's second largest chemical manufacturer, would have better ways of finding out how many hazardous chemical dumps there are than by taking a poll. But Union Carbide's purpose has nothing to do with the manufacture or disposal of chemicals, at least directly. The company is paying for these polls, and buying ads in major newspapers and magazines to publicize the results (or at least some of them—not the bit about toxic wastes), because "Union Carbide believes that we, together with other members of our society, have an obligation to . . . help build a consensus on public policies that affect our businesses and the economy as a whole." This, in other words, is Union Carbide's gambit in the great "corporate citizenship" rush. Mobil provides "Masterpiece Theater," Sperry is hectoring people to "listen," Union Carbide is "building a consensus."

AFTER THREE surveys over two years, the nature of this consensus is beginning to emerge. It is heavy on generalities and pieties: our challenges are great, we must all work together, the future lies ahead, and so on. Seventy-one percent of the public is reported to believe that business, labor, and government should "help each other." Tautologies also have widespread support. Americans believe, it seems, that "economic growth" means "the economy is growing, expanding, or increasing," and they "characterize its absence with words like recession." But some of the issues have a bit more edge. Through the magic of modern opinion polling, Union Carbide has created a "consensus" on subjects about which most people obviously have no opinion at all—many of which are not matters of opinion anyway.

Union Carbide would not necessarily accept that there must be 50,000 hazardous chemical dumps just because 52 percent of the population says there are in a poll. But only a few of the results are as unhelpful as that one. The first survey ("The Vital Consensus: American Attitudes Towards Economic Growth"), conducted by Roger Seasonwein Associates, reported that 67 percent of the population thinks that corporate profits "are much higher than they need to be." At this point, Union Carbide changed pollsters. The second survey ("Adversaries or Allies? American Attitudes on Business, Government and Growth") was conducted by Cambridge Reports. It discovered that the public believes low corporate profits are a terrible problem. It also contains this choice bit of analysis, after 30 pages of questions and answers about economic growth: "If a pattern can be discerned in these responses, it seems to be that those who see benefits arising from growth . . . tend to feel growth is more important than those who do not see it providing positive advantages. . . ."

The third and most recent survey ("The Emerging Consensus: Public Attitudes on America's Ability to Compete in the World") was conducted by Cambridge Reports early this year (after Caddell had sold his interest in the company). This survey reveals that the American public is increasingly concerned about international trade, wants business and government to work together to solve the problem, and favors various specific policies such as low-interest government export loans and strict anti-dumping statutes. Of course the truth is that most people don't give half a thought to international trade from one month to the next, want business and government to cooperate only in the sense that good people want everyone to cooperate and be happy, and are hampered in their judgment about anti-dumping statutes by having no idea what "dumping" is. But these are only minor difficulties to the expert pollster.

"Fully three out of four Americans," the survey reports, feel that the trade deficit "represents a serious problem for the country." But almost half, it also reveals, weren't even aware of the trade deficit until they picked up the phone one evening and found themselves discoursing with "trained, professional interviewers under the supervision of Cambridge Reports, Inc." Informed that it exists, 75 percent politely agreed it is a "serious problem." After all, a stranger has called you up long-distance to solicit your opinion about something. It must be pretty serious. Only a few soreheads—four percent—said the trade deficit "is not really a problem at all."

One thing the American people feel quite strongly about, according to Union Carbide, is letting US companies credit the foreign taxes they pay against their US tax bills. Current law generally permits this, but

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there are certain technical restrictions which US corporations would like lifted. You are familiar with the details, of course. Here is how the Union Carbide poll summarized the controversy, in case those questioned weren't on intimate terms with it:

> Some people say that granting companies tax credits for the taxes they actually pay to foreign nations could increase these companies' international competitiveness. If you knew for a fact that the tax credits for taxes paid to foreign countries would increase the money available to US companies to expand and modernize their plants and create more jobs, would you favor or oppose such a tax policy?

Sixty-seven percent said they favor such a policy. How about that?

POLLSTERS have developed a variety of devices to help remind people what their opinion is on complex issues they may not have thought about for a few days. A few key words are especially useful in jarring the memory. "Incentive," for example. Fifty-four percent favor "tax incentives for US manufacturing and service industries to compete abroad" and 68 percent want the government to create "new incentives" for business research and development. They also want "support" for exports through low-interest government loans. But as much as they like an "incentive," the American people dislike a "subsidy." Fifty-nine percent favor "stricter enforcement of U.S. laws against dumped and subsidized imports." Nasty foreigners give subsidies. They dump. We give incentives. We support.

Do you like "restraints"? Or do you prefer "cooperation"?

> The U.S. Government, under the anti-trust laws, often restrains large corporations from cooperating in business ventures. Some companies argue that . . . permitting large corporations to cooperate would give them a competitive advantage over foreign companies.

Fifty-four percent of those polled said they favor cooperation. Fifty-nine percent favor "temporary relief when import competition hurts U.S. industry." "Temporary relief" makes me think of Preparation H, but Union Carbide may have something else in mind. People weren't asked if they want their "relief" to take the form of import "restraints" (which of course it would). Fifty-nine percent also support "strengthening" US government agencies involved with trade. They weren't asked if they'd like to see these agencies "enlarged."

If Americans stand for anything, of course, it is "fairness." Told that "some people" think that foreign governments give "extra help" (incentives? support?) to exporters, and that "this is unfair to American companies," 59 percent (once again) say they favor efforts to make international trade "fairer." Whether export subsidies by foreign countries actually are "unfair" to the US is an eternal controversy. They are, in a way. But suppose the question had been phrased thus:

> Some people say that when overseas governments help their companies to sell things more cheaply in the United States, it is a good deal for the American consumer. Do you favor US government interference to stop this help so that prices will go up?

The results might have been different.

Cambridge Reports claims that its polling sample is "scientifically selected" to typify "the entire over-18, non-institutionalized population," but I have to wonder if much of the group wasn't institutionalized long enough to get PhDs in economics. Fifty-three percent, for example, assert that "Compared to foreign manufacturers, . . . American companies on the average find labor unions more of a help than a hindrance in being competitive and raising productivity. . . ." I'm ashamed to say that I don't know the relationship between unionization and productivity in even one foreign country, let alone all of them. Yet only 11 percent of the population apparently shares my ignorance.

UNION CARBIDE would like us to take these surveys as a serious measure of American opinion. In that case, the most amazing thing is not the consensus on controversial issues that the company heralds in its ads, but rather the number of Americans who will refuse to go along with any proposition, however unarguable. Ten percent, for example, disagree that "Trade is a two-way street." "Our survey shows that the public strongly supports the Administration's goal of cutting back regulations . . . ," says Union Carbide. The actual question was:

> Do you favor or oppose changing environmental regulations so that while they still protect the public, they cost American businesses less and lower product costs?

And indeed, 61 percent favor this. But surely it's more noteworthy that 26 percent of the population apparently wants to have costly regulations even if they aren't needed to protect the public. And a curmudgeonly eight percent disagree even with this:

> Some people say that Americans must make difficult choices in the 1980's in order to restore economic growth at home and American competitiveness in the international marketplace. They say that Americans must strive to develop new energy sources and conserve energy at home and on the job, increase productivity, scale down prices and wage increases, and adapt to changing markets, industries, and employment patterns. Do you agree or disagree with this idea?

But Mom, apple pie, and international competitiveness are not the only subject on which Cambridge Reports is helping American industry to build a consensus. The *Washington Post* reported last week that a recent poll conducted by Cambridge Reports "for a group of companies interested in" the MX missile system "shows more support for MX nationwide than expected." The *Post* story was about "a blue-ribbon panel of outside

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experts" who are studying the proposal to dig up large chunks of Utah and Nevada for the MX. The poll shows that the people of Utah and Nevada are relatively unenthusiastic about the idea. But, according to the *Post*, "the most striking statistic shows 73 percent nationwide 'more inclined' to accept the Nevada-Utah plan for MX if, after absorbing the panel report, the president voices his support for it." In other words, if people know that a blue-ribbon panel and the president of the United States favor something, they are more likely than otherwise to favor it themselves. This striking evidence of support for the MX "will be presented to the White House this week." Once again, what is most striking (and inspiring) to me is that 27 percent of the American people apparently would be less inclined to support something if they knew that blue-ribbon experts and President Reagan were for it.

Some people say examples like this demonstrate that opinion polls commissioned by corporations in attempts to influence the political debate are worthless at best and insidious at worst. They say that firms like Cambridge Reports are prepared to prove anything a company wishes about the opinions of the American people for a suitable fee. They say there are some interesting lessons here about the social role of corporations, the limits of democracy, and even the nature of truth, but it's too hot to get into all that right now. Meanwhile, these people say, when pollsters interrupt your dinner to ask a lot of ridiculous or fixed questions, you should offer them your opinion about where they can stick their questionnaires, then hang up. Do you agree or disagree with this idea?

Michael Kinsley

'If Reagan does something stupid, it'll be in Nicaragua.'

How to Avoid Another Cuba

by Nick Kotz and Morton Kondracke

Twenty years after its unsuccessful effort to overthrow Fidel Castro, the US government once again is pondering how to cope with a brash young Marxist-leaning government which it perceives to be posing a Communist threat to Latin America. Our newest nemesis is the Sandinista revolutionary regime, which in July 1979 ended the 45-year reign of the Somoza family in Nicaragua. And in an exercise eerie with *déjà vu*, US officials once again are at least discussing whether a less-than-desirable foreign government might be ousted, either by a Bay of Pigs-type paramilitary operation or by a somewhat more protracted "destabilization program."

The Bay of Pigs option refers to the launching of a counterrevolutionary force of former Nicaraguan national guardsmen and other dissidents from neighboring Honduras. The counterrevolutionaries, several thousand strong, now conduct war games in Honduras and Florida, have undertaken some border raids into Nicaragua, and proclaim themselves eager to reclaim their homeland. Under the military option being talked about in Washington, these Nicaraguans would be backed up by Honduran and perhaps Guatemalan military forces and would receive covert US aid. The script then calls for the citizenry of Nicaragua to rise up and overthrow its new oppressors just as it ousted Somoza.

Whether to rally the country around the revolution or because Sandinista leaders believe it, the Nicaraguan press is filled with warnings that a counterrevolutionary invasion is imminent. Americans who favor assisting and unleashing anti-junta guerrillas argue that an early assault is necessary before the Sandinistas can consolidate their control, suppress democratic opposition groups within the country, and build a military machine to threaten their Central American neighbors. In April, José Francisco Cardenal, leader of one major guerrilla group, the Nicaragua Democratic Union, told the *New York Times* that "Nicaragua can't be liberated only by Nicaraguans just as Somoza wasn't overthrown only by Nicaraguans. But we can't wait six months. A green light has to come from the United States."

Cardenal's group consists of civilians who opposed Somoza but quickly grew disillusioned with the way the FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front) was wielding power. It claims to have 2,000 fighters already inside Nicaragua, organized into cells in every city and province. The other main opposition group is the so-called National Liberation Army, made up largely of former Somoza national guardsmen.

For two months earlier this year, the counterrevolutionaries conducted almost daily border incursions

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which nearly kicked off a war between Honduras and Nicaragua. The dominant element in the Honduran army at that time appeared to be backing the guerrillas, apparently as part of its own plan to maintain military rule in Honduras rather than permit elections this November which would bring civilians to power for the first time in 18 years. Nicaraguan and Honduran officials lately have been conferring about ways to reduce tensions, Honduras's military president has vowed to go through with elections, and guerrilla activity has slackened. At the same time, however, the Reagan administration has declined to crack down on Cuban and Nicaraguan counterrevolutionary groups training together in Florida, claiming that since they conduct their maneuvers on private property, the government is powerless to act.

The administration's "destabilization" option involves a similar but longer-term and more complex approach to ridding Nicaragua of the Sandinistas. Under this plan, the already shaky Nicaraguan economy would be choked by cutting off US and other Western aid, provoking food shortages, unemployment, and rising discontent with the Sandinistas. The counterrevolt then would begin from within Nicaragua, and at the appropriate moment would be aided by Nicaraguan exiles arriving from Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and the US.

The destabilization option has in its favor the current condition of the Nicaraguan economy and the inefficiency of the country's ex-guerrilla leadership. Fidel Castro took over a substantially intact economy, but the Sandinistas arrived in power to find Nicaragua's assets looted by Somoza and his cohorts. The new government has received substantial amounts of foreign assistance, including $60 million from the US before aid was suspended in March, but the economy still is in shambles. Nicaragua has foreign debts exceeding the annual total GNP, and the cotton, coffee, and cattle industries—the main sources of export earnings—have been hit with price drops. According to advocates of destabilization, the United States should persuade its allies to cut off Nicaragua and should seek to block credits in international financial institutions, including the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, which Nicaragua needs to survive.

BOTH THE BAY OF PIGS and the destabilization options, according to several highly placed government officials, have been explored by the Reagan administration task force that has been working since early February to devise strategies to thwart perceived Soviet and Cuban expansionist threats in the so-called Caribbean basin, which includes Central America.

The government officials with whom we spoke said that there is no support at all within the Reagan administration for the traditional US response to obnoxious developments in Central America—an invasion by US Marines. "I know of no plans to put US combat troops into El Salvador, and sure as hell not in Nicaragua," said one official. "That kind of thing is over." The Bay of Pigs option does have advocates in the administration, though their number is reportedly small. Their colleagues decline to identify them, and most scoffed at this option, claiming that such an operation would fail just as the original Bay of Pigs invasion did in 1961, and would equally damage America's reputation if (as seems likely) its hand were discovered.

But these same officials were less ready to dismiss the possibility of a longer-range destabilization strategy which the US might mount in stages and adjust to economic and political conditions in Nicaragua. "The official position is that we haven't sought to develop that [destabilization] option," said one well-placed administration official, but in the next breath he added that he would not rule out "activity in a protracted campaign" to bring about the Sandinistas' downfall. Another official said that while Reagan's policy has not crystallized, a "realistic option" was "to oppose consolidation of a Communist regime tied to the Soviet Union—give them no encouragement or resources, so that sooner or later they will collapse or be discredited in the eyes of their own people."

A KEY QUESTION that both strategies raise is whether the US should give covert assistance to Nicaraguan exile groups against the day when they might return to their country. The American ambassador in Nicaragua, Lawrence Pezzullo, reportedly has urged Washington not to do so, calling the groups "poison," and warning that US assistance inevitably would become public—since the groups are infiltrated by Nicaraguan government agents—and would serve to discredit democratic opposition groups in Nicaragua trying to steer their country away from Leninism. In a recent lengthy cable Pezzullo cautioned against adopting any overt or covert strategy designed to topple the Sandinistas on the grounds that it wouldn't succeed, and might well consolidate the leftist faction's hold on the country.

Some administration officials, who acknowledged that military and destabilization strategies are being contemplated, predicted they would never be put into effect, partly because domestic economics is the administration's top priority and partly because they would be counterproductive. One official agreed that "if this administration is going to do something stupid, it's likely to be in Nicaragua because it looks so easy, but I predict it won't." The real danger, he and other government sources said, was that consideration of "tough" options will prevent the administration from choosing what seem to be "soft" options—such as diplomatic and economic efforts to influence the Sandinistas—and will "paralyze" or "freeze" US policy so that nothing at all gets accomplished. But whether or not the Reagan administration actually implements a Bay of Pigs or destabilization strategy, it is clear that the options are being considered, that they are being advocated by hardline foreign policy experts friendly

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to the administration, and that they are taken seriously by the Nicaraguan government. These facts all illustrate the sharp turn in US policy toward Nicaragua and Central America since Ronald Reagan replaced Jimmy Carter as president.

The Carter administration, with its focus on human rights, thought US interests would be served best by encouraging social and political reforms and democratic government in Central America. If the area was subject to Communist subversion, it was because for many years repressive regimes had failed to meet the basic needs of their people. Time finally ran out on the Somozas; they ruthlessly exploited the country for too long. The Reagan administration, on the other hand, views the area primarily through an East-West prism, seeing the struggle as one of the United States and its allies against expansionism by the Soviet Union and its proxy, Cuba. The multiple crises of Central America were neatly reduced by Secretary of State Alexander Haig to a Soviet "hit list" with Nicaragua at the top, followed by El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. The final prize, according to some hardliners, is Mexico, with its huge oil reserves and strategic position just south of the US.

The administration's interagency task force, comprised of representatives of the State and Defense departments and the CIA, has not altered its basic view of the Soviet threat after four months of work. One top official said that the group's principal finding was that "a classical effort of Marxist subversion" was under way, "successful in Nicaragua, far advanced in El Salvador and Guatemala, less advanced in Honduras." According to this official, strengthening the internal economies and military defenses of the Caribbean basin countries will help, but the struggle will not be won without accomplishing the more difficult task of "cutting off external support" from the Soviet bloc, Cuba, and Nicaragua.

THE HARDLINE ANALYSIS of Communist subversion as the root of Central American problems is consistent with President Reagan's oft-expressed world view. It is promoted politically by Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina, chairman of the Latin American subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and bureaucratically by a group of military men who are influential Central American policy-makers in the administration. In addition to Secretary of State Haig, these include retired lieutenant general Vernon Walters, former deputy director of the CIA and now special adviser to Haig; State Department counselor Robert McFarlane, head of the Caribbean task force and a former Marine colonel who previously served with Haig on the National Security Council staff; Major General Robert L. Schweitzer, a current member of the NSC staff; and retired lieutenant general Gordon Sumner Jr., a special State Department adviser on Latin America. The principal civilians making Latin American policy include

Map by Kenneth Grady for *The New Republic*

Thomas O. Enders, a tough career diplomat who once served as number two man in the US embassy in Cambodia and is now assistant secretary of State; and Roger W. Fontaine, a conservative think-tank veteran who is now chief NSC staff man for the region.

At an NSC meeting in late May, President Reagan approved the broad outlines of his task force's Caribbean basin plan, which calls for direct and multilateral economic aid (ideally in cooperation with Mexico, Venezuela, and other comparatively affluent countries) and trade concessions to bolster the fragile economies of friendly countries, plus military aid to help them control internal insurrection. What's not clear yet—and what much of Latin America is waiting nervously to see—is how the administration plans to stop the international flow of arms, training, and other support to Latin radicals, and how it plans to isolate and punish sources of such supply. When Alexander Haig warned that the US would "go to the source," he had Cuba in mind, but administration officials make it clear they regard Nicaragua as part of the problem too.

Publicly and officially, the Reagan administration does not consider Nicaragua to be totally lost to communism, but privately many administration officials believe that the Sandinista rulers are merely maintaining a facade of pluralism and non-alignment while they consolidate their power and arm themselves. The dominant view in the Carter administration was that democracy still had a chance in Nicaragua, if the United States did not radicalize the country by precipitous hostile action. Former Carter aides and other liberals point to the facts that non-Marxist opposition political parties still exist in the country, private businesses still control 60 percent of the economy, non-government trade unions still have thousands of members, the independent newspaper *La Prensa* still publishes critical articles about the government, and

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the Catholic church is as strong as ever. Nicaraguan government spokesmen also cite these examples as evidence that their revolution is developing its own model, including a mixed economy, rather than slavishly following the Cuban example of totalitarian state socialism. Some non-Sandinista Nicaraguans also say that the Sandinista leaders, whatever their shortcomings, genuinely want to improve the lives of their people, and can be influenced toward moderation if given aid to help rebuild the country—improving health, education, and housing for the impoverished.

ON THE OTHER HAND, it's widely agreed that the ruling Sandinista leadership is dominated by dedicated Marxists with strong attachments to Cuba, notably junta coordinator Daniel Ortega, Defense Minister Humberto Ortega, and Interior Minister Tomas Borge. There have been no elections since the revolution two years ago, and none is scheduled until 1985—and then only to "reinforce and improve the revolution." The independent press has been virtually eliminated except for two radio stations and *La Prensa*, which played a major role in toppling Somoza. The Sandinistas have sent mobs to harass *La Prensa*, and other mobs have prevented opposition political parties from rallying. The government is trying to replace independent labor unions with state unions under its control, and opposition businessmen have been threatened with having their firms expropriated if they object to Sandinista policies. Rhetorically, the regime has been stridently anti-US. Politically, Nicaragua has sided with the Soviet bloc on most issues at the UN and has signed a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union. An estimated 600 to 800 Cubans are training the Nicaraguan security police and army. Nicaragua has plans to create the largest army in Central America, with 50,000 men in regular service and another 200,000 in the militia.

And, of course, Nicaragua has provided a funnel for Communist arms supplies to anti-government rebels in El Salvador. Recent critiques have challenged the accuracy of the Reagan administration's white paper on the arms flow, and some of the administration's documents indicate that Nicaragua was not entirely cooperative with some Salvadoran groups. But even Nicaraguan diplomats do not deny that some government officials "acting in a personal capacity" were involved in shipping arms. "When the government finds out officially," said one Nicaraguan, "then it's stopped."

In March the Reagan administration suspended US economic and food assistance to Nicaragua, claiming to be bound by US law requiring a cut-off if Nicaragua participated in acts of international terrorism. The US pointedly did not demand repayment of $60 million already provided and indicated that the remaining $15 million might be released once arms shipments stopped. According to US officials, the arms flow now is down to a trickle, but last week the administration appeared to be imposing new conditions for the resumption of aid.

The new emphasis was on the potential threat Nicaragua would pose to its neighbors if it follows through on plans to expand its army from 20,000 to 50,000 men and receives heavy tanks and MIG fighters from the Soviet Union. A 50,000-man army would give Nicaragua a force larger than the combined armies of its four Central American neighbors. The administration leaked an unconfirmed intelligence report about Soviet tanks being secretly brought into the country, and reported that Nicaraguan pilots were receiving flight training in Bulgaria. State Department officials later discounted the tank story, but not before Haig and Enders had made strong statements about the Nicaraguan threat. Enders charged that Cuba was attempting to build up Nicaragua as "a forward base of operations with a large army and intelligence apparatus already in place." In not-for-attribution conversations, administration officials also accused Nicaragua of precipitating an arms race in the region, and one warned, "if Nicaragua goes balls out, I guess we'll have to go balls out." Another official said, "The export of revolution to El Salvador by Nicaragua is unacceptable. This is not an idle threat. We will cut off aid—and do other things." He refused to specify what "other things."

MEANWHILE the Nicaraguans have reacted indignantly too, accusing the US of initiating the arms race in El Salvador and Honduras, and possibly, if aid resumes, in Guatemala too. Government spokesmen say that in view of the threat these countries pose to Nicaragua, the young regime needs arms and an army, and has the sovereign right to acquire equipment where and in such amounts as it deems necessary.

Amid the verbal barrages, Nicaragua has privately requested talks between its top junta leaders and Haig. The administration has replied that there is nothing to talk about so long as Nicaragua brings in weapons and exports revolution. Administration officials also say they have no interest in building up Sandinista leaders when administration policy is to isolate them. Nicaraguan diplomats say the junta has issued instructions to its embassy in Washington not to request top-level talks any longer, but Nicaraguan ambassador Arturo Cruz still tells visitors, "the worst error this country could make is to do something rash. To make a decision without a reasonable dialogue would be regrettable, even for future generations. I'm really concerned that this administration might give the 'go' to a policy of total isolation or even something worse. How can the US do that without frank, heart-to-heart discussions?"

Beyond its hot rhetoric, the administration so far has avoided doing anything rash. It has not permanently terminated US aid or tried to persuade any foreign country or international institution to cut Nicaragua off. It has not moved in any discernible way to put the military option into effect. And yet, out of frustration and anger with Nicaragua, the administra-

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tion seems eager to do "something" to turn back the tide of Marxism and to make good on its criticisms of Carter administration softness. Meanwhile, it is being egged on by non-administration rightists such as Cleto DiGiovanni Jr., a former CIA agent who writes for publications of the Heritage Foundation and the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies. He argues that "the head of the monster needs to be cut off. While it is unpleasant to mount a destabilization program against another government, it might be far cheaper than allowing that government to export misery and revolution endlessly. Do we want to live with that or do we want to bite the bullet?"

Judging by comments of administration officials, there remains considerable fear that unless something is done, Nicaragua will develop into a powerful Marxist-Leninist state, a Soviet and Cuban proxy capable of threatening its neighbors and fomenting revolution throughout the region. At the same time, wiser spokesmen in the administration seem aware that the military option is a sure loser, and destabilization a likely one. None of America's allies in Europe, the Far East, or even (except for some rightist authoritarian regimes) Latin America shares the administration's enmity toward the Sandinistas. Any attempt at destabilization likely would be met with increased aid flows from overseas, and especially from the Soviet bloc and radical Arab states, to the embarrassment of the US. No sooner had the US suspended economic and food aid, for example, than the Soviet Union provided 30,000 tons of grain and Libya contributed $100 million. The less Nicaragua gets from the West, the more it will have to depend on the East.

WHAT KIND of policy would make sense? Clearly the US should do everything possible to bolster democratic elements in Nicaragua, including the business councils, labor unions, opposition political parties, the Roman Catholic church, and the independent press. According to William Baez, head of the Superior Council of Private Enterprise, "we [Nicaraguan businessmen] are not like the Cubans who left home after their own country's revolution. We stayed here. If the United States writes us off now, it will be the end of the moderates. It's our heads that are on the line."

In 1975 top officials of the Ford administration were tempted to write off Portugal as a country gone "down the tubes" to communism. But dissenting officials persuaded the administration not to give up the cause, and democracy in Portugal was saved, largely through aid and political support—and some covert financing from the US—channeled through the Socialist parties of Western Europe. Instead of trying to persuade our allies to cut off Nicaragua, we should join them in helping to rebuild its shattered economy and improve life for its needy people—with the clear understanding that its pluralistic, free institutions must be preserved. To get special help to those institutions, the US could work through Christian Democratic parties in Europe, since the Social Democrats presently seem infatuated with the Sandinistas.

Realistically, Nicaragua probably is destined for the foreseeable future to one-party rule by a Sandinista government, with close ties to Cuba and the Communist bloc. But it doesn't have to be a clone of Cuba or a constant menace to US interests. Mexico, it should be recalled, has a one-party government, a mixed economy, and friendship with Cuba, but it is a sophisticated nation whose principal interests are tied to cooperation within the Western Hemisphere. Nicaragua may yet be nudged in this direction while fulfilling the broad social aims of its revolution.

AS A MATTER of basic self-interest, the US should keep close watch on developments within Nicaragua and expose violations of human rights by the Sandinistas and any tendencies to cooperate with Soviet and Cuban adventurism. But when the administration protests, it had better have its facts straight—and not charge one day that Soviet tanks have been delivered, only to retract the charge the next. The US is a powerful nation that can afford to engage in less rhetorical posturing and to be less hypersensitive to the rhetoric of the new, inexperienced revolutionary leaders of a small nation of 2.5 million people, especially one that has just ousted a corrupt, repressive dynasty imposed and sustained for nearly 50 years by the US. The Sandinistas, after all, take their name from a revolutionary martyr, Augusto César Sandino, who fought against the Marines and was murdered by the first Somoza at what was supposed to be a peace conference. The US ought to recognize that, given the enmity of its right-wing neighbors, the Nicaraguans will feel the need to get sizable stores of weapons from somewhere, and the only place from which they now can get them free is the Soviet Union. Before the US conducts a mini arms race with the Soviets in Central America, we should at least try to promote negotiations among the Central American nations that might lead to reduced tensions. If Nicaragua then persists in arming for war, everyone will know that it is the source of instability in the area.

The Nicaraguans have claimed repeatedly that they want to maintain a mixed economy with a large private sector, that they desire and need trade and civil relations with the United States. They say they want negotiations and dialogue with us. The US should not turn them down coldly, but offer to talk and to include them in our Caribbean basin economic plan *if* they desist from gun-running, from building up an unnecessarily large military force that threatens their neighbors, and from helping the Cubans export revolution. The main point is that Nicaragua has not yet fallen irretrievably over the Communist brink, and we should not push it. If the Sandinistas decide to go the Cuban route, the world should see that they did it by themselves, and that we tried to help Nicaragua maintain the proud independence it claims is its goal.

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Books and the Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on films

Swiss Cheese

I hope that the following statement proves to be false. The career of Alain Tanner, the French-Swiss filmmaker, is following a familiar pattern: early promise, early achievement, then increasingly repetitive, assumptive, and self-indulgent work as it becomes increasingly clear that the director has said what he had to say and is not growing. This statement, which I would love to have the pleasure of retracting, is strengthened by Tanner's new film *Messidor*.

His first feature, *Charles Dead or Alive*, made when he was 40, was a version (conscious or not) of Tolstoy's *The Living Corpse*: a successful middle-aged businessman tries to reclaim his life by going to live among young dropouts and rebels. It was the work of a born filmmaker, but it was damp around the edges with sentimental leftism. His next, *La Salamandre*, is one of the important films of the postwar era, I think. Two writers, of different intellectual tempers, try to do a TV script about a working-class girl who committed a crime a year before. Emphases shift through the inquiry and, in a sense, she beats them, is too strong for them, emerges at the end free and angry and happy. It's one of the best films I know about changing consciousness in women and about bourgeois-liberal holidays in radicalism.

Tanner had a co-author on the script of *La Salamandre*, the English Marxist art critic and novelist John Berger, and I assumed that Berger's help explained the toughening of sinew and the stripping away of flab. This inference was heightened by Tanner's next—*Return from Africa*—which he did without Berger and which was just a protracted anecdote of bourgeois embarrassment about failure to break out of conventional patterns. But Berger returned for *Middle of the World*, which was stronger than *Return* yet much weaker than *La Salamandre*, a picture of promise that ended awash in big unearned radical pronouncements. And Berger also worked with Tanner on the next, *Jonah Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000*, which was drenched unbearably in the leftist sentimentality that had dampened the first and third pictures. *Jonah* was full of good-hearted radicals whose good-heartedness and radicalism were made to seem interchangeable and inseparable. A supermarket checkout girl was fired for thievery, a bad history teacher was fired because he was a bad teacher, etc., but our sympathies were supposed to be with them because they were contra society. The romance of radicalism had never been more glib, even in Godard.

Now Tanner has made another film without Berger, has said in fact that he made it without a formal script (if you choose to take interviews as gospel), that many scenes were improvised on a scenario. Improvised or not, this time he repeats himself in visual and structural formulations that exceed the idea of personal style and merely reveal destitution (like Fellini in *City of Women*). Connected with that, worse than that, the film is nothing but sophomoric, radical, and philosophic assumptions.

Messidor takes its name from one of the summer months in the calendar of the French Revolution: it's also the name that the two girls in the film assume. Jeanne, 19, is a history student in Geneva, browned-off by studying for exams, who leaves her boyfriend to go hitchhiking in the country for a few days. Marie, 18, is a shopgirl who has been visiting her father in Geneva and is now returning to the town where she lives. The two girls meet when the same car gives them a lift. They like each other, each being an untypical experience for the other.

They push on together, hitchhiking and hiking past Marie's town, past the limits of the money they have, which means more or less what Jeanne has. They decide to play a kind of game with time and chance and motion, just to see how long can they go on. In the course of their adventures, they—brace yourself—meet *many kinds of people*! They meet generous ones and crabbed ones and lecherous ones, dismissive ones, complaining ones, uninterested and compassionate ones. Although they are already 18 and 19, it's only now they discover that there are many sorts of people in the world.

They nearly get raped, though it's not quite clear why they couldn't have jumped out of the car when the two men turned up a dirt road. In order to get away, Marie has to bop one of the men with a rock. Why didn't the men expect attack? Why didn't each man grab one girl instead of both men grabbing Jeanne and leaving Marie free? Answer: because then the girls would not have been plunged into a legal-moral mess.

They are subsequently given food and shelter, by people who are therefore good; refused help, by people who are therefore bad. They steal a loaded pistol from an army officer who gives them a lift; hold up a grocer at gunpoint; are described on TV as armed fugitives; and, before their arrest, kill a man who, they think (incorrectly), informed on them.

Films Worth Seeing

Bustin' Loose. Richard Pryor. Never mind the Scotch-taped script. It gives some good chances to Richard Pryor.

Café Express. Nino Manfredi, restrained and humane, in a pleasant Italian little-man comedy.

The Four Seasons. Alan Alda wrote and directed this super sitcom about three couples who vacation together. Neil Simonized script, lifted above itself by keen interplaying of Alda and colleagues.

Oblomov. Goncharov's novel is canted somewhat, but the Soviet filmmakers have touched much of its spirit.

SK

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During all of this we are expected to sympathize, if not approve—to understand that this heartless and materialist world of theirs and ours has numbed them into anomie and aimlessness, has driven them into exile and anarchy within their own country. All I could see was an exhibition of angst and alienation of the most facile, college-dorm sort. (I'd like to have heard the police chief explaining to the murdered man's widow: "You'll understand, ma'am. The girls were in an existential crisis.") Perfectly matched with the ideational banalities in the picture are the arty platitudes: sequences in which the two girls simply loaf and absolutely nothing happens; sequences in which we see only stretches of exquisite Swiss landscape —exquisitely photographed by Renato Berta, Tanner's customary cinematographer—ostensibly intended as ironic contrast between nature and man; a sequence in which the two girls squat and relieve themselves side by side; a sequence in which they play Russian roulette with the pistol. And the philosophic apex of it all? They come to realize that everyone passing in the street has goals and interests of his own.

The yoking of worker and intellectual, the use of withdrawal as statement, the categorization of all people as nice or not nice, these are Tanner elements that Tanner has by now reduced to cliché. But the very idea of the picture is by now a cliché, the picture that details the exile of a person within his own society, going on a pilgrimage without a goal. It's a postwar crop, the best of which, Blier's *Going Places*, was about two young men. (Can Tanner not know the Blier film?) Blier's men were sharply characterized: they were post-1968 nihilists whose lives mocked the very piety-mocking radicalism of 1968, just as Blier's direction mocked Godard's 1960s cinematic radicalism. Wenders's *Kings of the Road*, even the recent *Voyage en Douce* and *Cocktail Molotov*, fit more or less in this genre—call it the generation-gap, moral-political picaresque. But a special hazard of any picaresque is the string-of-beads structure; more than most forms, the picaresque has to justify its going on. *Messidor* could have been a half hour shorter and omitted nothing of consequence, could have been a half hour longer—perhaps would have been if the budget had permitted.

Another defect, particularly grievous in a meandering film, is the casting of the two girls. In *Going Places*, the two young men themselves, Gerard Depardieu and Patrick Dewaere, conveyed buried bitterness and rue, menace, sexual aura. Tanner's two young women, Clementine Amouroux (Jeanne) and Catherine Rétoré (Marie), are as close to negligible as any two people can be who are followed by a camera for two hours. (No one whom a camera scrutinizes for two hours can be utterly uninteresting all the time, but that says more about photography than it necessarily says about the subject.)

Tanner—knowingly?—includes another connection to *Going Places*. When men are not available and blood is warm, Jeanne suggests a homosexual act to Marie, just as Depardieu does analogously to Dewaere in *Going Places*. Blier's men do it, Tanner's women do not—Marie, the working-class girl, is horrified. Blier's men were of more or less the same intellectual class. Maybe Tanner is implying something about working-class puritanism.

But then everything is straining to imply something in *Messidor*. Like many a serious but desperate director, Tanner seems to insist that every detail in his film is heavy with meaning. I began to feel that Tanner intended highway markers and food brands and types of cars to be "saying" things, like those ballets in which toys and furniture come to life at night. When news of the girls is broadcast on TV, it's supposed to show us how nasty the capitalist media are, I think. (As if any country wouldn't broadcast alarms about fugitives.) When the girls move into German-speaking Switzerland, I suppose it is to italicize their exile in their own country, and since Jeanne is the only one of the pair with a little German, I suppose it shows something about impediments to working-class education.

But no. These are all only sterile, thin strategies laid over a hollow idea. Shorn of pretense, *Messidor* is about two discontented girls who let their general unfocused unhappiness inflate its own importance and license their slide into crime. As a picture about the pitfalls of fake profundities, it might have been a black comedy, but it's certainly meant otherwise. Angst and anomie and the struggle to retain reason are much too grave questions in our time for this sort of smug, pass-the-wine-jug sighing.

Many a good artist has had, essentially, only one thing to say, but the living of his life has taught him differing ways to say it. Tanner has had only one thing to say so far but is in effect repeating the way he says it. His art is dying of starvation, and like many of the starving, it's getting bloated as it dies.

Robert Brustein on theater

The Demise of BAM

The most remarkable thing about the recent collapse of the Brooklyn Academy of Music Theater Company is how little it is being remarked upon; this is not an event destined to excite much reflection in the New York press or the New York theater community. True, the artistic loss is minimal—only a few of BAM's productions received any critical praise, and none challenged the audience in a way that justified its lack of popularity. From a cultural point of view, however, the demise of BAM is an ominous thing indeed. It represents the fizzle of an ambitious American theatrical institution, one of the largest in the country and the only one of its kind in the New York area, and it is therefore the most significant local failure since the APA closed its doors in the early 1960s. In context, certainly, BAM deserves a more extended obituary than a niggardly, perfunctory column offered in *Variety*.

The venture never really had much of a chance. To plant a new resident theater in the rocky soil of Brooklyn would have been a risky act at any time, but in the rainless seasons of our current cultural climate, it was downright foolhardy. What Harvey Lichtenstein, who runs the academy, obviously had in mind was a New York equivalent of the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis—a large resident company devoted to classical plays of the European repertory supplemented by occasional American revivals. Since the Guthrie had been conceived by the British director whose name it bears, Lichtenstein also looked

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to England for leadership, first to Frank Dunlop of the Young Vic and, when he failed to deliver an audience, to David Jones of the Royal Shakespeare Company. The English connection was tactically shrewd—it helped to generate strong corporate support and attracted a whopping $400,000 grant from the Ford Foundation before the company had staged a single play—but it was also artistically shortsighted. Jones was eager to recruit a company of good American actors and offered unusually high salaries in the hope that the pay would attract them to season contracts; what he lacked was sufficient familiarity with our talents or techniques. Among those who joined him, few had the experience to play the great roles, and virtually none had ever worked together before, much less with any of the directors chosen to stage the repertory. The results were predictable: English-style productions that failed to excite interest either by the singularity of their approach or the power of their performance—rather like Masterpiece Theater without Derek Jacobi or BBC Shakespeare without Ian Richardson.

Commendably, Jones had determined to develop a permanent company performing in rotating repertory rather than plug in stars for short-term commitments; this would take time and our society has little patience for the long haul. Both Jones and Lichtenstein had been counting on a reservoir of goodwill during the developmental stages of the theater, not recognizing that Americans want instant culture; and neither man was prepared for the geographical provincialism of native New Yorkers. The Brooklyn Academy of Music is just as accessible as Papp's Public Theater in the East Village, but few Manhattanites were willing to venture into the uncharted wilds of an alien borough, and those who did were soon put off by bad notices and disappointing shows. Even the director's impeccable British credentials failed to attract subscribers; in Brooklyn, he was soon considered just another Brooklynite, one of those Joneses with whom nobody was trying to keep up. The goodwill and tolerance he needed had lasted less than one season. The critics began calling for stars; the audiences began demanding hits; by his second year, he was scheduling anthology chestnuts and losing many members of his original company. With each new production becoming an exercise in lowered morale, it was just a question of time before the whole idea of a resident repertory company near New York would be abandoned by the BAM board.

Since critics rated each new BAM production on the same consumer graph as the offerings of the commercial theater, the demise of the company is being treated like the closing of a Broadway show that has failed to meet the standards of the marketplace. This may explain the relative indifference of the press to a collapse of some consequence. I find this unfortunate, not just because the failure of any serious artistic institution, however faltering, diminishes us all, but because it takes place in a context of extreme uncertainty and confusion regarding the very idea of a serious theater culture. For this reason, I think it a mistake to consider the fate of BAM in isolation, as simply an artistic failure—though this is admittedly an important factor in its unfortunate history. It has more significance as a symptom of a disease which is afflicting the entire nonprofit theater movement.

A partial list of the other symptoms suggests that this disease may be metastasizing. Within the last year, the Chelsea Theater—one of the most adventurous organizations in the country—lost its director, Robert Kalfin, and turned into a booking house. The PAF Playhouse in Long Island, a theater committed to new American plays, fired its director, Jay Broad, and virtually ceased to operate. Playwrights Horizon in Queens closed down and lost its director, Robert Moss. The much celebrated Theater Row on 42nd Street—host to a number of Off-Off-Broadway groups—may soon revert to store fronts as more groups like the Direct Theater and the IRT close down for failure to pay the rent. The American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco—traditionally one of America's most fiscally stable nonprofit companies—may not have a season next year if it doesn't

SPEND

Diminishing returns she said,
you've got to make up your mind someday—
good money after bad my father would have added
had he thought about it, and he did.
He didn't talk much period, his pursuits
being bargains, discounts, the model
that looked like the real thing but never was.
I told my friends he worked in the metal business—
they thought I said meadow business,
but asked no questions and I didn't correct them.
He died too early to understand someone else
and I grew up too slowly to help him out.
After these ten years it doesn't matter anymore
because I can understand it all. What comes back
is not what you've given, that much we know
no matter how slowly we've grown into the world.

But you have to decide someday, this way or that,
to toss the good after the bad or whatever it is
you have to give. I have the usual memories,
the collective sadness of growing up among the dying,
never knowing to say enough at the right time—
I am my father's son, but I've learned to spend
with a carelessness that would have won me nothing
in my father's eyes, they were so pale blue.
Living well doesn't cost much if style
is what you're after. My friends can all have
the best of what they want, but their wants
are simple and elegant. My father wanted so little
that it cost him everything, with nothing coming back.
But he would have said that if you wait long enough
something will come back. Diminishing returns.
Nothing that needs to come back comes back.

Daniel Halpern

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meet a $400,000 deficit. The Vivian Beaumont Theater in Lincoln Center, having been dark for three seasons, opened in 1980-81 with three productions, only to announce that it was closing down again for a year while renovations are in progress (the bets are that such renovations will keep the Beaumont dark for at least two years). Even the TCG auditions in Chicago for younger actors are being suspended because resident theaters can no longer afford to offer seasonal contracts. These are just a few of the incidents that lately have come to my attention, many of them unrecorded in the press. I suspect that virtually every theater in the country has similar problems. What this augurs is a once-proud theater movement in considerable disarray.

I acknowledge the apocalyptic nature of my conclusions and the repetitiveness of my alarums, but the depressing thing about pessimists in our country is that they are usually proven right (one way to earn a reputation as a prophet in America is to foretell a bleak future). Taken together, the signs and portents are ominous, even without consulting the intestinal systems of cleft-footed animals.

Meanwhile, back at the Reagan ranch, the Office of Butchering and Manglement is preparing not only to halve the appropriations of the National Endowment for the Arts in 1982 but to slice six million dollars from the budget already approved by Congress for 1981. The assumption behind this blithe behavior is that private individuals, private corporations, and private enterprise suddenly will be overcome by a spirit of philanthropy, and fill the empty coffers, which is rather like expecting a hungry lion to start licking the lamb it has been feeding on. The professed belief of the Reagan administration in the altruism of the private sector is absolutely awe-inspiring, especially when the new "federalism" is a specific response to a demand on the part of the wealthy to be relieved of any public responsibility whatsoever. Soon the private citizen will be able to pocket not only the 70 cents per capita that is now expended on the arts, but also any federal funds previously provided for schools, transportation, welfare, local services, or local aid. "You want justice," says Azdak in Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, "but you're not willing to pay for it." It is not hard to foresee the day when not only justice will be reserved primarily for those who can afford it, but also education, police and fire protection, train services, garbage collection, and mail delivery.

The spirit of the marketplace that informs the present administration is spreading everywhere—even to the free press, which may explain why the demise of the nonprofit system is proving of so little interest in the media. When the pages of major newspapers are devoted to counting Broadway box office receipts, the passing of the institutional theater is unlikely to command much space. Perhaps when the whole movement has gone under, and serious culture exists only in the history books, that fact might get mentioned in a theater column, squeezed between ads for *Sophisticated Ladies* and *Woman of the Year*.

The Afghan Resistance

A Journey Through Afghanistan: A Memorial
by David Chaffetz

(Regnery Gateway; $12.95)

The Struggle for Afghanistan
by Nancy Peabody Newell and Richard Newell

(Cornell University Press; $14.95)

Afghanistan
by Louis Dupree

(Princeton University Press; $9.95, paper)

In 1975, midway in his journey by horseback across pre-Marxist Afghanistan, David Chaffetz encounters a lonely Afghan schoolteacher. "It's too bad the government allows these people to go on living the way they do," the young teacher tells him, "the *khans* robbing the peasants blind and the peasants living like animals." Chaffetz pays this bitter comment little mind and rides on. Earlier in his travels Chaffetz has made it plain that the government, so far away in Kabul, can hardly be said to have "allowed" these people in "the savage countryside" (as the teacher calls it) to do anything. Until the Marxist coup in 1978, the Kabul government was little more than a voice on the radio and a schoolteacher to be ignored, as far as the peasants of the back passes of Afghanistan were concerned.

Yet in the schoolteacher's bitterness, I think, lies one key to what went wrong in Afghanistan. The contempt the teacher had for his countrymen was shared by a few thousand other Afghans like him, and those few thousands took control of Afghanistan in April 1978. Reading about Chaffetz's schoolteacher reminded me of another Afghan, one who lived near the apex of Kabul society, a man—I'll call him Ali—related to the old royal family. Ali owned the only motorboat in the country, and was co-owner of its first nightclub. On the telephone Ali could lead you to believe he was British. I have been told that he also spoke faultless Russian. Ali was very good at role-playing, so good that he seemed to have shed his Afghan identity. And Ali suffered from ulcers.

But not all educated Afghans were so lucky as Ali and the schoolteacher, who experienced relatively mild cases of alienation. In the early 1960s a brilliant young Afghan was sent abroad—to West Germany, the story goes—to study medicine. At the end of the decade he returned to Kabul and was assigned to a hospital there. Afghanistan is a dirty country, and the thought of all that dirt, those germs, those microbes, started to prey on him. He began to wash his hands frequently; then, like Lady Macbeth, incessantly. He was trying to remove the germs that plagued his country, germs he had never seen until he went to the West, but which he now believed were festering on his hands. He was removed to a mental hospital.

That the doctor, the schoolteacher, and Ali were alienated from their coun-

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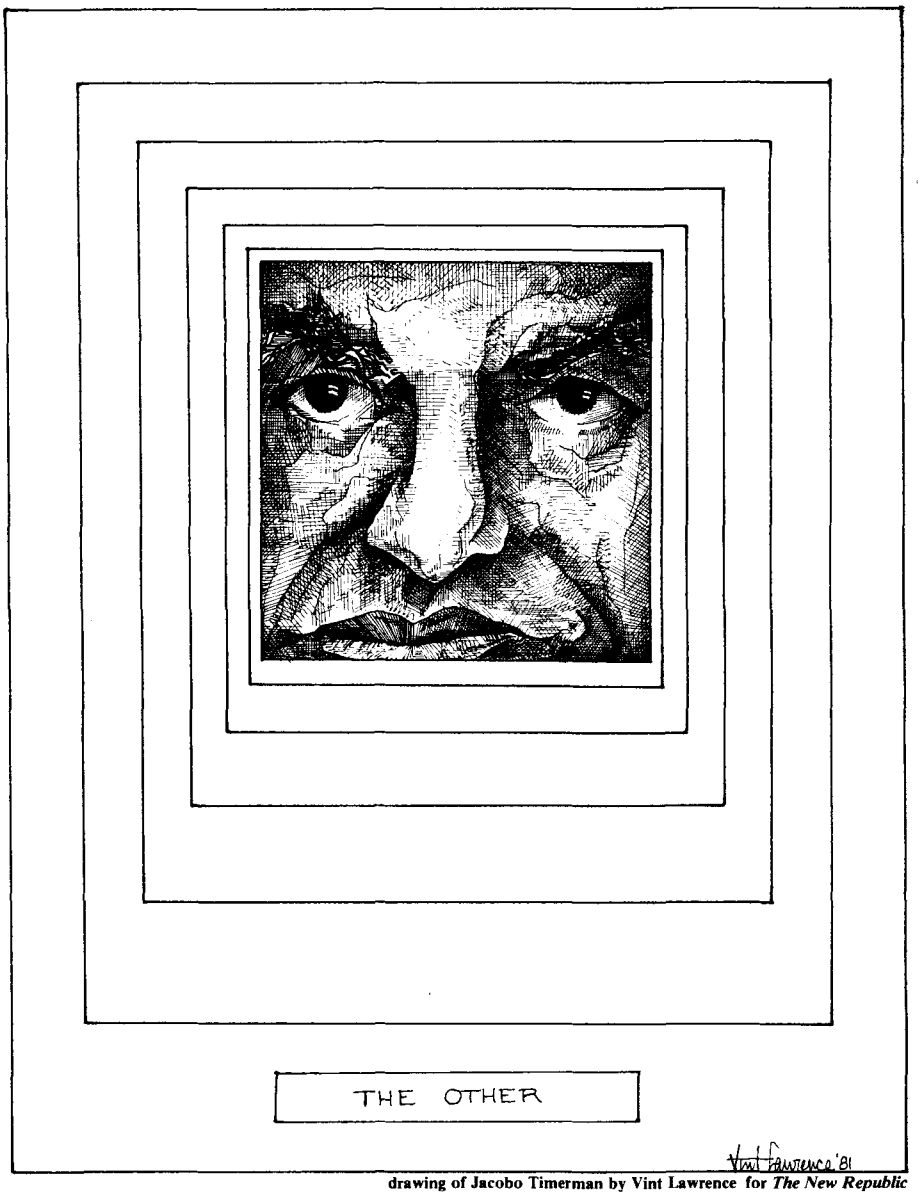
try by their Western educations is not unusual. Nor is the stress they felt at trying to bridge the two cultures. The disparaging term the British used for those so caught between two worlds was "wog"—an abbreviation for "Westernized Oriental Gentleman," according to the most plausible lexicographic derivation. This is not to say that any educated person from Afghanistan is a wog. Today the range of options is far wider than it was a century ago. When melting-pot America entered the arena, many third world students suddenly had the option of simply going over to the other side and, with their degrees as their passports, becoming US citizens. Others—Nur Muhammad Taraki, who once served with the Afghan embassy in Washington, DC, and Hafizullah Amin, an alumnus of Columbia University, come to mind—reacted in the opposite manner, turning their backs both on their own land and on the West, to embrace Marxism instead. But few actually went to live in the Soviet Union; returning to their native lands, they became Marxist Oriental Gentlemen—"mogs."



drawing of Jacobo Timerman by Vint Lawrence for *The New Republic*

MUCH OF Nancy and Richard Newell's *The Struggle for Afghanistan* is a polemic padded with geopolitical gibberish, but their chapter on what the Afghan mogs did after seizing power in 1978 makes fine reading. As the Newells tell it, there were two factions of Afghan Marxists, the Khalq and the Parcham. The former, which led the April 1978 coup, made its first order of business an attack on the latter, whose members over the next few months were exiled, imprisoned, tortured, and shot.

With the Parchamis out of the way, the Khalq regime turned to reforming Afghanistan. That's when the trouble started. Khalqi actions in late 1978 revealed that their attitudes were like those of Chaffetz's schoolteacher, while their condition was not unlike that of the mad Afghan doctor. With his alienation internalized, the doctor wound up in an asylum. The Khalqis' alienation was externalized; it was aimed at the country they ruled.

In mid-1978, the Khalqis embarked upon a Marxist fantasy. They went by the book, not by what was obvious to any Afghan. In a country that is 75 percent desert, where the control of water and seeds determines who eats, they decreed simple land reform. They tried to liberate women by eliminating the bride price, a system which might seem repressive to us but which was for the Afghans a way of ending feuds and setting up alliances between families. They made education compulsory for both sexes. They introduced a Marxist curriculum. In an act of either pathetic misjudgment or foolhardy provocation, they did away with Afghanistan's flag of green (the color of Islam), red, and black and replaced it with a solid red banner that was modeled after the flags of the Soviet republics.

The Newells argue that the true purpose of the reforms was to shatter the social structure of the countryside, creating a vacuum the party would fill. There were no pilot programs to test what would happen when, say, land was redistributed: the reforms were meant to be sudden, sweeping, and universal. The abruptness of the effort to emancipate women leads the Newells to suspect that the regime's intention was to undermine the structure of authority in the family and destabilize relations between households.

As an American Marxist named Irwin Silber was later to lament, "Revolutionary decrees were obviously no substitute for an armed party structure in the countryside." As the people of rural Afghanistan—that is, 85 percent of the population—came to see it, Kabul had declared war on them. Within a few months of coming to power, the Khalq regime had violated the "Three Zs" of Afghan life: *zar* (gold), *zan* (woman), and *zamin* (land).

There were violent consequences: some young party member sent down from Kabul, his head swimming with his new power, would order the villagers to abide by the reforms. Olivier Roy, writing in a recent issue of *Dissent*, describes what happened next: "the male teacher wants to compel the girls to go to school; or the cadre wants to check on marriage arrangements; or he

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forcibly enters a house to take a census. A quarrel ensues; somebody fires; the Party man is killed." When such killings occurred, the Khalq regime overreacted, terrified by any sign of rural resistance. "If two people fired on them," an anonymous Afghan Marxist later told the *Pakistani Progressive*, "they bombarded the whole village." That village would have ties to those near it, and soon the entire tribe, or the whole valley, would go over to the resistance. In late 1978 and early 1979, this scenario was repeated again and again all over Afghanistan. This was the situation to which President Nur Muhammad Taraki, the first Khalqi ruler, was referring when he informed the *Kabul Times* that "Whoever stands against our revolution—whoever he may be—we will put him in jail and will really punish him." This was what the World Peace Council of Helsinki, Finland, described in 1979 as "the true and wonderful reality which is the new Afghanistan."

By March 1979 the Khalq regime was threatened. In western Afghanistan, the people of the lovely old oasis city of Herat revolted and massacred the Russian advisers resident there. In May, in the eastern part of the country, thousands of tribesmen attacked the city of Jalalabad. Counting on the support of the Soviet Union, the Khalqis pushed on. But Moscow was getting nervous. In September 1979, the Soviets seem to have ordered President Taraki to eliminate Hafizullah Amin, the Khalq strongman who had organized the 1978 coup. With Amin dead, one supposes, Taraki would have slowed down the pace of the reforms and, as cautious Marxists say, learned to walk before he began to run.

The plan backfired: Amin shot Taraki. As long as Amin remained in office, the resistance would continue. The question was who would get to him first, the resistance or the Red Army. Here the Brezhnev doctrine loomed large: the Soviets would not allow a "socialist" nation to leave the Soviet camp, as Afghanistan appeared to be doing. At this point—late September 1979—the Soviets must have begun drawing up their plans for invasion.

WHEN THE Soviets took Kabul on Christmas Day 1979 the important thing for the West was not what was being invaded but who was doing the invading. Indeed, the Soviets could not have found a country *less* upsetting to invade. Among American journalists, Afghanistan had been something of an inside joke, a synonym for obscurity. Reporters writing about it went for laughs, perhaps because there was no other way to get an Afghanistan story into print. The *Wall Street Journal*, for example, was better than most in its coverage of the country, but only eight months before the April 1978 coup, it ran an article which chortled that Afghanistan had "a gross national product of only $2 billion a year (about what the US spends annually on dog food)."

The Soviet invasion changed all that. It was the kind of story journalists love, an obscure subject with large implications. It offered something to every periodical from *Time* to the journals of Orientalia that noodle along with 250 subscribers. It had an aggressive superpower, a poor third world nation, communism, Islam, historical parallels, political lessons and linkages, subcontinental rumblings, and summit talks. It even—almost—had oil. Only a few people knew anything about Afghanistan, but everybody had something to say about it, and so it became one of those stories that sheds more light on its commentators than they do on it. The newsweeklies trumpeted "A New Cold War"; the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* did not deign to discuss the invasion (in a display of non-eponymous unconcern, it still hasn't, a year and a half later); the *New Statesman* carried a letter complaining that "military and economic assistance to a progressive government" could hardly be labeled "imperialism"; *Commentary*'s editor, Norman Podhoretz, wrote: "It may, as I say, already be too late."

The experts, such as they are, agreed with Podhoretz. In the *New York Review of Books*, Yale historian Firuz Kazemzadeh assured his readers of "the ultimate defeat of the insurgents, who cannot indefinitely resist the overwhelmingly superior forces now ranged against them." And Louis Dupree, in an epilogue to what the front cover of his book advertises as the "1980 Edition" (it seems to be a reprint of the 1973 edition, with two epilogues tacked on), concludes that "The hawks will pick the bones of the Afghan nation until nothing is left." Following the experts, most of the world regarded Soviet control of Afghanistan as a *fait accompli*, and in the year after the invasion, Japanese exports

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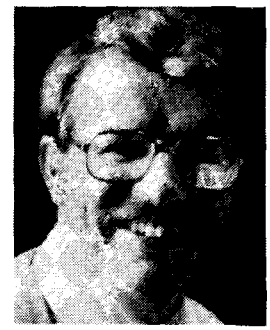

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to the USSR rose by ten percent, and Western Europe's increased by twice that figure.

But Afghanistan is a land that confounds assumptions. As Dupree observes, only one of the country's four main rivers, the Kabul, carries water that reaches the ocean; the others either flow into the Aral Sea or evaporate in the desert. Today those in the Afghan resistance are reported to be showing "increasing confidence," to be "better armed and better able to confront the Soviet soldiers than they were a year ago." The past 18 months of successful resistance to the Soviets raises questions that were not important when the Soviet tanks first rolled over the Hindu Kush. What is this country? Who are these people?

FIRST, "these people" are most of the Afghan population. A year ago, the fighting in Afghanistan appeared to us to be a civil war in which the Soviets were aiding one side, but, increasingly, it is a war that the Soviet Union is waging against Afghanistan. When the Marxists came to power in April 1978, their two factions, Khalq and Parcham, had between them, according to most estimates, about 5,000 members. They promptly set to killing each other. Then when Taraki and Amin had their shootout in September 1979, Khalqis killed Khalqis. More than a few Khalqis must have died when the Soviets came in three months later to install the head of the Parcham faction, Babrak Karmal. In April of this year, a former Parchami official, Saddiq Farhang, told the *New York Times* that more than 10,000 intellectuals had been liquidated since the 1978 coup. Also in April, Babrak commemorated the third anniversary of that coup by promising to cleanse the civil service of "undesirable elements." (Whether or not this purge will occur remains to be seen: Babrak's Soviet masters have in the past forced the two factions to compromise and cooperate, so that at one point, the Newells report, the Khalqi secret police chief and a Parchami official he is alleged to have tortured both sat in Babrak's cabinet.) Meanwhile, the resistance has been picking off government officials, and 25 percent of the government cars on the streets of Kabul are said to have bullet holes in them. What this all means is that fewer than 10,000, and possibly just a few hundred, Afghan Marxists serve as a facade for Soviet domination, which takes the form of 85,000 Red Army soldiers plus 30,000 or so Afghan troops of doubtful loyalty.

There is no way of knowing how many Afghans are actually fighting the Babrak regime; estimates run as high as 80,000. This would mean that the Afghans are outnumbered by soldiers enjoying technological superiority. But the resistance has the home court advantage, and guerrilla warfare is almost the national sport of Afghanistan, which according to the CIA has a population of 14.7 million, of whom 1.8 million are males fit for military service. These numbers suggest that the Soviets cannot win through simple escalation.

THESE are people accustomed to battling powerful foes. Twice in the 19th century and once in the 20th the Afghans fought the British Empire, which at that time abutted Afghanistan, just as the Soviet Union does today. The most important of the three Anglo-Afghan wars was the first, which lasted from 1838 to 1842. In April 1839 the British placed their own man, Shah Shujah, on the Afghan throne. After occupying Kabul for two years, the British force decided to withdraw to Jalalabad, in eastern Afghanistan. Of the 4,000 soldiers and 12,000 camp followers who left Kabul, only one, a Dr. Brydon, reached the safety of the British garrison in Jalalabad. Most of the others died; a few were taken hostage; some wandered for months as beggars. Dead also in a few months was Shah Shujah, a fact Babrak Karmal would do well to remember. (Still, Shah Shujah's end was not exceptional. In this century there have been ten rulers of Afghanistan: Abdur Rahman died of gout in 1901; his successors have been, in chronological order, shot, exiled, shot and hanged, shot, exiled, shot, shot, and shot.)

In the 1840s the British learned what the Soviets seem to be discovering now—that Afghanistan is easy to invade but hard to hold. The British officials in India held responsible for the invasion were soon dismissed. This is how Lord Ellenborough, the new governor-general of India, summed up his predecessor's attempt to control Afghanistan: "Instead of making them [the Afghans] our friends, we have made them out implacable foes. The policy which we pursued was disastrous, because it was unjust. It was, in principle and act, an unrighteous usurpation, and the curse of God was on it from the first."

ELLENBOROUGH did not know just how disastrous the Afghan episode would prove to be. The Afghans had demonstrated to their flatlander cousins in India that the British were far from invincible, and were in fact capable of great cowardice. The sepoys of the British army in India heard stories of how, during the retreat from Kabul, mounted British officers had fled from the fight while their own men, left behind on foot, had fired on them in fury. Those stories planted the seeds of the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857. There may yet prove to be another historical parallel here: thus far the Soviets have not suffered so humiliating a defeat as was inflicted on the British in 1842, but they have come in for a harder time than anyone, including the Soviets, expected. Who knows what stories are now circulating among the Afghans' flatlander cousins in Soviet Central Asia, and what effect these stories might have in 15 or 20 years? This is not so farfetched a possibility as it might seem. If present Soviet policies and population trends continue, the Red Army increasingly will resemble the army that mutinied against the British in 1857. Today, according to demographer Murray Feshback, one out of every five Red Army conscripts comes from the "Soviet sunbelt," where most Soviet Moslems live. By the turn of the century, the proportion will be one in three. Yet, Feshbach writes, the Red Army's command structure "remains exclusively Slav, and mainly Russian." Ethnic Russians, moreover, have been known to call Soviet Central Asians *chernozhopy*, which is politely translated as "black bastards."

Understandably, the British came to develop a hearty respect for the Afghan people. Sir W. K. Fraser-Tytler, who fought in the third Anglo-Afghan war and later served as British minister to Kabul, characterized the Pathan tribes-

"REED IRVINE, of Accuracy in Media, suggested to *Washington Post* editor Ben Bradlee that in view of the Janet Cooke developments the *Post* should now come clean on Deep Throat. Bradlee's answer was short, and obscene. Irvine tried to take out an ad in the *Post* to tell the story. No go. Virginia Rodriguez, the *Post*'s Public Relations Manager, rejected the ad on the ground that Bradlee's language was 'unacceptable to the advertising standards of the *Washington Post*. . . .'"

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men of eastern Afghanistan as

> violently opposed to any infringement of their liberty of thought or action; divided and split by the devastating scourge of the blood feud, and united only in a fierce determination to defend themselves and their country from all forms of external pressure. Nowhere in the world are to be found better fighters among their own rugged hills than the Pathans.

The Afghans did not, however, reciprocate in their feeling toward the British. Even in the late 1960s, one Afghan wanting to insinuate that another was a liar would exclaim in mock surprise, "Oh, I didn't know you were English."

AFGHANS being Afghans—and they will be, unless the Soviets turn to genocide—it seems likely that the Soviets will be deprecated in a similar fashion a century from now. The Afghan memory is a powerful thing. In southwestern Afghanistan there is an outcropping of black rock that, from a certain angle and with a bit of imagination, looks like the statue of a woman. Afghan legend says the boulder is the petrified corpse of a woman who betrayed an Afghan army to Alexander the Great. Even today, 2,300 years after Alexander invaded Afghanistan, travelers passing the rock will throw stones and spit at it.

On his journey by horse, David Chaffetz, whose good eye and better ear make his book the most informative of the three reviewed here, noticed this emphatically non-Western sense of time. For the average Afghan, he writes, "History was no story, not a chain of causation, but part of the landscape, a sense of place." Chaffetz means that what we would consider the distant past is not distant to the Afghan, for whom it can hold just as much immediacy as last year or last week. One proverb captures this sense of Afghan time: "The Pathan waited one hundred years before taking his revenge, and cursed himself for his impatience."

While this view of time no doubt has been a source of strength for the resistance, I think that it is also, in an indirect way, the source of Afghanistan's troubles. A static view of history suits the farmer who follows the cycle of seasons as his fathers did and as he expects his sons will do. But it can be enormously disheartening to the young engineer who waits a decade for official approval of his plans to build a dam, or to the woman who would break with tradition and embark upon a career. Faced with this rock-hard view of life as unchanging, many young Afghans seized on the glittering promise of progress held out by Marxism, with its "scientific" description of the lockstep march of history from feudalism to capitalism to socialism. Their desperate faith in the inevitability of Marxist change may account for the blindness and seeming stupidity of the Khalq regime.

In the rural Afghan view of life lies also an explanation for the peculiarly tentative nature of the public comments made by Afghans in this country and in Europe. To be sure, many are restrained by fear of reprisals against relatives still in Afghanistan. Yet any Afghan educated enough to live and travel in the West and express his views in the Western press is likely to feel some qualms about siding wholeheartedly with the tribesmen who make up the resistance. Like those who have held power in Kabul since April 1978, expatriate Afghans are liable to feel that the people of the provinces will have to be dragged kicking and screaming into the 20th century, and that modernization can be brought about only by decree. (Modernization, we are learning, usually flows not from laws but from circumstances; it occurs not by decree but by degrees.) While most Afghans in this country seem to believe the Babrak regime is manned by vicious quislings, they are not very much happier with many of those in the resistance, which includes men who, according to Dupree, sometimes tattoo their women with the same property symbols they use to mark their horses, camels, and sheep.

That the people of Afghanistan are hardly McGovernites does not mean we should watch them be crushed. The essential point here is the right to self-determination, a point that seems to have escaped the American officials responsible for lifting the partial embargo on the sale of grain to the Soviet Union. A century from now, if it comes to that, the sons and grandsons of today's resistance will be sniping at the Soviets, and cursing themselves for their impatience. That means there will be Afghan refugees in Pakistan for some time to come. At the very least, the US government should make sure those refugees do not go hungry, this

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year or 15 years from now. And if they have food, they will fight.

The last three years have been ugly for the Afghans. Ten to 15 percent of the population of Afghanistan has left the country; more than 100,000 Afghans have died in prison and in battle; the economy, never healthy, has been crippled. Yet there is a bit of irony in this tale of the failure of Afghan Marxism. One could say that Marxism works in strange ways. The Marxist fantasies of the mogs gave rise to a resistance cast in the classic Maoist mold, the people's war in the countryside. This resistance proved to be so strong that the Soviets had to intervene to rescue the regime, but that intervention only stiffened the resistance. A few months later, Poland erupted, but the Soviets had at least two good reasons not to go in—the Red Army was fighting on one front, in Afghanistan, and was ready to fight on another, with 50 divisions tied down on the Chinese border because of (among other things) an earlier quarrel over interpretations of Marxism-Leninism. Thus, because of one experiment with Marxism (China), and a second with Marxism (Afghanistan), a third experiment with Marxism (Poland) survives. Even though they have not yet pushed back the Soviets and achieved freedom for themselves, the Afghans have helped the Poles defy the Russians and gain a greater measure of self-determination. The result, then, is that the Soviet way of life has not been imposed in one country, and it has been lifted, and perhaps ended, in another.

Tom Ricks

Tom Ricks is a freelance writer who has lived in Afghanistan.

The Solitude of Jacobo Timerman

Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number
by Jacobo Timerman
translated from the Spanish by Tony Talbot

(Knopf; $10.95)

Jacobo Timerman is a solemn, pudgy, distinctively Jewish-looking writer who has been through hell, through several kinds of hell. He seems unable to forget anything he has been through as a prisoner of the right-wing Argentine military, even though he now lives in Israel at peace with his immediate surroundings. Timerman has a long Jewish memory for afflictions, burnings, humiliations that goes beyond the assaults on his person in clandestine prisons. History—the stupefying resemblance to the Nazis of Argentine fascists who keep Hitler's picture on the walls of their torture rooms—is all too alive in Timerman, gives him no rest even in the promised land.

His worst suffering came from moral solitude as well as physical pain when he was being tortured and screamed at—"Jew! Jew! Clipped prick!" The solitude was deepened when Jacobo Timerman, passionately Jewish as he is, discovered how easy it was for his fellow Jews in Argentina to overlook his "predicament." More than one person here has said to me about this terrifying little book, "I already know what it's about. I don't want to know any more." And since Timerman has spoken out on the Reagan administration's friendliness toward the Argentine military junta, administration propagandists who happen to be Jews have already been rallied to attack Timerman. It was not enough for Timerman to have electrodes applied to his private parts; he must also be attacked in the *Wall Street Journal* by Irving Kristol. Timerman is a lot of trouble.

This in effect is what Argentine Jewish leaders said about Timerman when he was arrested in April 1977, his famous Buenos Aires liberal newspaper *La Opinión* confiscated, and he was slammed about, tortured, deprived of toilet facilities. Argentina, as Secretary Haig and our UN representative Jeane Kirkpatrick have told us, is not a totalitarian country like Russia; it is an authoritarian country like Guatemala and South Korea. An authoritarian country is one with which we can still do business, have influence. A totalitarian country is dominated by one evil party. The God-fearing military junta that runs Argentina does not have absolute power. There are rival groups within the army. And after all, Argentina has a supreme court. The less than 400,000 Jews (barely two percent of the population) enjoy freedom of worship. Many are decidedly prosperous. Why, by publicly protesting the fate of one Timerman, stir up further the paranoic colonels who told Timerman under "interrogation" that the Israelis want to occupy Patagonia, that World War III has already started in Argentina, and that this is one war that those faithful to the teachings of Adolf Hitler will not lose?

BY IGNORING his case, says Timerman, the Argentine Jewish leaders were playing it safe—just as the German Jewish leaders were playing it safe when everything was pointing to the Holocaust. Timerman had long been a marked man. One of the most terrible sides to Argentine life is the silence about the thousands taken away by rival terrorist groups, the children kidnapped and farmed out to families not their own. *La Opinión* regularly printed the names of those "missing." Although Timerman was so disgusted with President Isabel Perón that he approved the army coup in 1976, his opposition to both left-wing and right-wing terrorism and his constant appeals for democratic legality infuriated the atavistic military chiefs.

Jacobo Timerman says he was arrested for calling attention to the "missing," for being out of tune with the times in Argentina. The worst of his crimes, he makes clear, is that he was a passionate Jew who stood out in a way that the circumspect leaders of the Jewish community did not. For 30 months, before his citizenship was revoked, his property was confiscated, and he was hurriedly shipped out of the country, he was manhandled, imprisoned, constantly screamed at as "Jew! Jew!" Since he was an internationally known newspaper man, his family was able to publish appeals in the world press. The Carter administration actively sought his release. Patricia Derian, assistant secretary of State for human rights (the post to which Reagan nominated Ernest Lefever), personally interceded for Timerman with President Videla. No formal charge was ever made against Timerman; the supreme court of Argen-

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tina ordered his release, and when this was ignored, threatened to resign. Timerman was not expelled from the country until late 1979. The military holding him seems to have known that another group was coming to his apartment (he was finally under house arrest) to kidnap and murder him.

TIMERMAN says that his real crime in the eyes of the military was that he confused them. They could not understand how an opponent of leftist terrorism could oppose the right, how a loyal Argentine could also be a liberal Jew and a Zionist. Hannah Arendt pointed out long ago in *The Origins Of Totalitarianism* that the Nazis wanted a model of reality so orderly that it became fiction. The total "otherness" of being a Jew—a Jew like Timerman—recalls the "otherness" of being a Jew under totalitarianism.

Timerman's account of his clandestine prisons, his torture at the hands of brutal guards, his horror at being forced to foul himself, will survive as the most painful yet most clearheaded narrative of the predicament of the Jew in countries not "totalitarian" but merely "authoritarian." There is a great difference between them, of course. Most Argentine Jews are not in trouble with the junta. And it is perfectly true, as Irving Kristol notes, that we can deal with authoritarian regimes, or hope to. But would someone like Ernest Lefever want to intercede for a Timerman as Patricia Derian did? The pleasures of realpolitik are not why the Lefevers and Kristols are indulgent to right-wing military regimes; it is because they themselves are right wing. Only human rights "purists," as Kristol calls them in a *Wall Street Journal* piece appropriately called "The Timerman Affair" (as if Timerman really were guilty of something instead of being an isolated Jew tortured by Argentine fascists)—only those obstinate liberals whom Reaganites now call "the enemy"—will wonder why the distinctly pacific Timerman was such trouble to the regime. Even when he was under house arrest on the 15th floor of his apartment building in Buenos Aires, a helicopter kept flashing lights into his apartment.

Maybe this was just one difficult individual. But the total exposure to which Timerman was forced to submit his body, his family, his opinions, his Jewishness, gives his book a fierce solemnity that I will not forget. Timerman obviously will never get over the horror of seeing nazism in Argentina directed against him personally. As Irving Kristol says, Timerman is "self-centered." What is worse, Timerman probably will never be able to relinquish his sorrow and contempt over the silence in Jews about what the situation represents for them.

This silence Timerman bitterly equates with the accommodation offered the Nazis by German leaders at the opening of the Nazi regime, and by the *Judenrat* officials in the ghettos as the Holocaust got under way. When the Argentine supreme court ordered his release and the military tribunal found that there were no charges against him, Timerman remained under house arrest. Yet the legal adviser to the Jewish institutions in Buenos Aires claimed that Timerman's arrest was not illegal. After all, the supreme court itself had not been disobeyed; the court had ordered his release from the president, not from the military junta.

Timerman's unbearable sense of solitude in his various cells was something that Jews in Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia have known all too well. The fact that he is a Jew tells his "judges" and torturers everything else about him. "Jew" is an admission of guilt. From one of his cells Timerman could hear the screams of a man of 70, long a convert to Catholicism, who was still "Jew" to his jailers. Timerman's interrogators had no historical sense of what a Jew was, claimed that Zbigniew Brzezinski was a Jew, that Russia was ruled by Jews, that the Israelis were preparing to invade Argentina. Officially Jews are not restricted; Israel enjoys full diplomatic recognition and even supplies arms to Argentina. But since the constant terror, chaos, and the annual 170 percent inflation rate have not yet led to the establishment of an openly fascist regime, Jewish leaders constantly make excuses for the military junta.

> There are no gas chambers in Argentina, and this leaves many with a clear conscience. Yet between 1974 and 1977, the violation of girls in clandestine prisons had a peculiar characteristic: Jewish girls were violated twice as often as non-Jewish girls. Must all anti-Semitism wind up in soap? If so, then anti-Semitism does not exist in Argentina, and it becomes a matter of accidental, coincidental situations, as the leaders of the Argentine Jewish community claim. But can there be anti-Semitism without soap? In that case, the Jewish community leaders are

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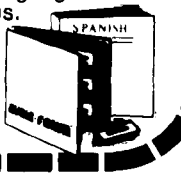

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no different from the Judenrat of the Hitler ghettoes at the beginning of the Holocaust.

This is strong stuff, especially when Timerman goes on to explain why there was no aid or comfort for him from Jewish community leaders. These are people, Timerman says, who feel that "It's best to work in silence in order to ransom whomever you can, rather than create scandals that might provoke the military."

> But everyone knows that something terrible has already happened in recent years when you consider two facts: that the repression took place in the second half of the 1970s, not 1939; and that nothing equal to it had taken place in the Western world since 1945, with the end of World War II.

When Secretary of State Haig was recently asked to justify our new friendliness toward Argentina, he explained that both countries had in common "a belief in God." Timerman is not an observant Jew; he is an old-fashioned Labor Zionist who has not been afraid to criticize Begin even in this country. This, too, is being used against him in the anti-Timerman campaign being mounted in this country by right-wing Jews. How is it possible for one Timerman to be so difficult? Timerman's recent appearances in Washington and the publication of his book have proved such an embarrassment to the administration and its right-wing Jewish salesmen that every possible slur against him is being imported from Argentina. And "human rights" are even more unpopular in Buenos Aires than they are in Washington.

TIMERMAN, having lost everything in Argentina, having just barely escaped with his life, having undergone the peculiar moral horror of being imprisoned and tortured because of his unchangeable condition as a Jew, is not a realpolitiker like Jeane Kirkpatrick, Carl Gershman, Elliot Abrams, or Irving Kristol. He is just a Jew who in his own country has experienced anti-Semitic hatred in the starkest possible way. He *knows* that nazism has never died. His book brings back the truth of Jewish fate in "extreme circumstances"—something many of us have never known or no longer wish to know:

> What is frightening is to realize how content we feel because we suppose there are deeds that cannot be repeated. It is true that 6 million Jews cannot be murdered—tortured and murdered. But if, only thirty-five years after this did happen, the Jew can be considered the enemy, tortured and killed for being that enemy, then he has kept his place in history, his historic condition persists. And his helplessness to change his relationship with history persists, as does the world's inability to help him or understand him.
>
> We were not all Jews in those hidden prisons. Many of us were. We Jews continued to be Jews, and being Jewish was a category of guilt, even when we were declared innocent of other offenses and absolved of other crimes.
>
> I believe that all this could have been prevented. By the Jews themselves, by the Christians. But it was not. And remembering what happened in Europe, uniting the two experiences, the German ones of the 1930s and the Argentine one of the 1970s, it is difficult to find consolation. There is no possible consolation.

Alfred Kazin

Alfred Kazin is writing a book on American writers from Emerson to Eliot. His *The Inmost Leaf* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) and *Starting Out In The Thirties* (Vintage) are now available in paperback.

The Culture of Hope

The Intellectual Resistance in Europe
by James D. Wilkinson

(Harvard University Press; $20)

Thirty-five years after the end of World War II, Europe looks very different from what most people predicted or hoped in 1945. In some ways the mood of the immediate postwar years seems even more remote than that of the 1930s; and James D. Wilkinson, by reconstructing aspects of it for us, has made an interesting and original contribution to the intellectual history of our time. He has analyzed the hopes and beliefs of a number of writers in France, Germany, and Italy as they developed during the war years and the effect they had on the moral, intellectual, and political climate of the later 1940s, before their hopes collapsed under the pressure of the cold war and the harsh realities of economic life.

Just as in France after the war of 1870 there were many people who shared Ernest Renan's belief that only an "intellectual and moral reform" of the country could compensate and atone for the disaster, and just as again in 1919 those who had experienced the Great War believed that only if it had been a "war to end war" could the suffering it had caused be justified, so in 1945 all over Europe there was a widespread faith that out of the ruins a new social and economic order could be constructed.

In writing of "the intellectual resistance" Professor Wilkinson uses the term resistance in a wide sense, and rightly reminds us that the active and militant resistance whose members blew up railroad tracks or organized guerrilla bands was always composed of a minority; indeed, for most Europeans resistance to an occupying power or a tyrannical government—or even collaboration with them—was often an undramatic decision taken almost without knowing it. Many intellectuals therefore believed that it was their task to make clear the nature of the fundamental moral choice involved. Professor Wilkinson tends to refer to the militant resistance as "the underground" to distinguish it from the passive resistance known in Germany as the "inner emigration" or from the moral resistance involved in circulating a poem or writing a novel that might be considered critical of the regime. In fact a number of the writers discussed in this book were not members of the active underground and many of them were not directly involved in politics after the war. Their role was to adopt a moral position that would enable them not only to face whatever their own fate might be, but also to keep alive certain values that would enable the survivors of occupation and tyranny to start afresh when the war ended. As the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed by the Nazis within days of the German surrender, put it, "To think and act for the sake of the coming generation, yet to be ready

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to die any day without fear or anxiety—that is the attitude we are forced to adopt in practice."

JAMES WILKINSON'S main subject, however, is not so much the attitude of his selected writers toward the German occupation or the Nazi or fascist tyranny during the Hitler and Mussolini years, but rather what they did immediately after the liberation when they were faced with the possibility of actually implementing the reforms they had been discussing in secret during the war. Here the problem of comparing France, Italy, and Germany becomes more difficult. Professor Wilkinson makes an interesting point when he quotes the German Alfred Andersch, who distinguished between the German and Italian experience: "The Italian spirit emerged from the war into the world more intact than the German. Italy had already regained its self-possession. It could appeal to a tradition and it did so." Because fascist Italy, in spite of Mussolini's boasts, was never a wholly totalitarian state, it was possible for the king and the fascist Grand Council to dismiss Mussolini in a way it would have been impossible to get rid of Hitler. The Italians were thus able, in the phrase of the time, to "work their passage" and demonstrate in action their repudiation of the fascist regime. This meant that during the last year and a half of the war the armed resistance could establish itself as an effective political force with a claim to influence postwar development, in strong contrast to the situation in Germany. It was also notable how many Italian intellectuals were directly involved in the resistance. The first reaction to fascism of some of the most significant writers, such as the poets Montale and Quasimodo, had been to withdraw into a hermetic style and a quietist personal vision (though Quasimodo was later to commemorate the massacre by the Germans of the inhabitants of the village of Marzabotto); other leading writers such as Pavese or Vittorini "aspired," in Wilkinson's words, "to create a literature that would speak to the masses and to the intellectuals alike, that would be inclusive and not exclusive."

The German experience was different in a number of ways from that of either Italy or France. In both of those countries the resistance had a strong organization ready to play a political role at the end of the war, even if its hopes were to be disappointed. In Germany no such organization existed. The active resisters directly involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler in 1944 had been decimated. The terror also had claimed among its victims such figures as Helmut von Moltke and his circle, who had been actively engaged in discussions about the future of Germany after Hitler. As a result, when the Allies arrived in Germany in spring 1945 there were only a few isolated members of the resistance able to play any part in the reconstruction of Germany. Moreover, and this is something James Wilkinson perhaps underestimates, the whole moral and intellectual climate of Germany during the period immediately after the German surrender was conditioned largely by the policies of the occupying powers. They already had made the emergence of a coherent German resistance difficult, if not impossible, by their insistence on a policy of unconditional surrender; and after that surrender the political atmosphere differed not only between the Soviet zone and other areas, but even between the British, American, and French occupation zones. By underestimating these differences, Professor Wilkinson tends to give perhaps too much importance to what were essentially limited local phenomena like the *Antifas*, the anti-fascist groups which sprang up in some places in 1945. He realizes, however, that because the occupying powers controlled supplies of newsprint and were responsible for licensing newspapers, the truly influential intellectuals at that time were those who had access to the Allied-sponsored media. Thus in Germany journalists often performed the roles which in France or Italy could still be filled by outstanding creative writers like Jean-Paul Sartre or Carlo Levi.

THE POSSIBILITIES of those writers who had remained in Germany under the Nazis also had been more limited than in France or Italy: one only has to compare the oblique symbolism of Ernst Jünger's *On the Marble Cliffs* with the directness of Vercors's *La Silence de la Mer*, or the way in which Elio Vittorini was able in spite of the censorship to express his disillusionment with fascism in the 1930s, to see how much greater the possibilities for implicit criticism were in France and Italy. There the censor could sometimes be evaded, and there was a flourishing underground publishing business. The German writers' contribution to recording the experience of life under Hitler mostly came after the end of the war—whether in fiction, as in the admirable novels of Heinrich Böll, or in the works of personal recollection and social analysis like Eugen Kogon's *The SS State*. For many German writers the most they could hope to achieve was an accurate record of their own immediate experiences. Wilkinson quotes Günther Eich's poem *Inventory*, written while he was in an American prisoner of war camp in 1945, in which the poet carefully enumerates his personal possessions—his cap, his coat, his shaving kit—and makes the best of his circumscribed world in a style reminiscent of some of the work of the British poets who wrote of their army experience, especially Henry Reed's sequence *Lessons of War* in his 1946 volume *A Map of Verona*. The basic experiences of military life remain much the same under any political regime.

While many of the most famous German writers were in exile, most of the most famous French writers remained in France. Thus authors such as Sartre, to whom James Wilkinson de-

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votes some of his most interesting pages, had a genuine continuity of experience through the war and into the postwar world, so that it is easier to focus a study of this kind when dealing with France than with Germany. For Frenchmen the memory of the wartime experience was not always wholly bad and could point directly toward a new society. "What did I get out of the Resistance?" Emanuel d'Astier de la Vigerie wrote. "The most important thing, besides a certain dignity was . . . that it is the only period of my life when I lived in a truly classless society." And in Italy the critic Giaime Pintor, who was killed on a resistance mission (and about whom, since he is not so familiar a figure as some of the other writers discussed, Mr. Wilkinson might have told us more), wrote in 1943, "We musicians and writers must renounce our privileges in order to contribute to the liberation of all. . . . Today all the possibilities of the Risorgimento are open to the Italians once again."

James Wilkinson traces the growth of these hopes in the immediate postwar years. In conclusion, he maintains that although the political achievements of the resistance were less than had been expected in the first excitement of the liberation, "the intellectual Resistance can serve to correct the common assumption that Europe's cultural history in the first half of this century is marked exclusively by themes of despair, scepticism and moral relativism." We may disagree about how much comfort this offers to us Europeans in our present mood of irritation and frustration—with our own societies, with each other, with the Russians, with the Americans—but there is no doubt that Dr. Wilkinson has illuminated in a subtle and perceptive way a crucial period of European intellectual history.

James Joll

James Joll is Stevenson Professor of International History at the University of London.

The Promised Land of Feminism

Beginning to See the Light
by Ellen Willis

(Knopf; $12.95)

A dozen or so years ago, when feminist writers were gleefully attacking traditional notions of female destiny, the women's movement held out a wonderful possibility—the hope that a new spirit of advocacy, ridicule, and defense would end women's feelings of alienation from themselves. Certainly the women doing the writing claimed to be in touch with their real feelings for the first time. The vehemence of their writing—the rude personal confessions and accusations—may have frightened or repelled a lot of people, but few would have disagreed with Norman Mailer when he said that women had never written this way before. And yet, at the same time, women's-movement writing developed some excruciating stylistic tics. The special curse of such journalism is the circular confession—the confession not of sins or suffering or joy but of mere consciousness of self. And when, as in recent years, the self is described in ready-made terms borrowed from the women who broke through earlier, the result is a new style of alienation.

When Ellen Willis's pieces appear in New York's *Village Voice* or in *Rolling Stone*, they are something of an event—debated and discussed, sometimes ridiculed, often admired. In this collection of essays drawn from the past dozen years, Willis, a woman formed by the utopian hopes of the 1960s, emerges as a natural dissident, an admirable antagonist to counterculture sentimentality and the simplicities of the left. And because her intellectual stamina and independence are something to admire, the turgid self-involvement of her writing is a kind of disaster (its influence is a disaster too). For example, a key essay called "The Family: Love It or Leave It" argues that "family chauvinism" forms the center of the right's counterattack on liberals and the left, that the family remains a trap for women, and so on. This doom-laden piece is considerably overstated, but what's really unbearable is writing like this:

> Intimate connections are important to me. I want a mate, or so I believe, and possibly a child. Before the counterculture existed, I was attracted to the idea of communal living and I still am. Yet obviously other priorities have intervened: I haven't found what I supposedly want on terms that I can accept. The psychologist in me suggests that I don't want it as wholeheartedly as I think, the feminist retorts that it's not my fault if sexist society keeps offering me a choice between unequal relationships and none, and I'm sure they're both right. Anyway, I wouldn't take back the choice that I've made. I would not wish to be a different person, or have been shaped by a different time.

The assertion "Intimate relations are important to me" is a little like "I am not a crook"—immediately it plants doubts where none existed before. The whole passage, rising to the calculated arrogance of the final sentences, is laborious and stiffly self-conscious in ways that have become oppressively familiar in op-ed pieces, "hers" columns, and "lifestyle" essays. Later on we hear about one of those "intimate connections." Willis is having an affair with a married man:

> At night I would sit in my kitchen arguing with myself, debates that usually began with the reflection that what I was doing was selfish, irresponsible, and an egregious breach of female solidarity. But goddamit, I would protest, I refuse to define it that way! I really believe there's such a thing as a basic human right to love whom you love and act on it. But if you're hurting another woman? Making her unequal struggle with this whole fucked-up system more difficult?

And so on, into the night. The married man, of course, is never mentioned again. We hear nothing of his qualities or of what happened to this problematic love affair; he is only a counter in a public argument between Willis and herself. What's infuriating about such writing is that Willis, like other prominent feminists, sees herself as an exemplar—the sisters, presumably, are all agog to find out if sex with a married man is OK—and yet she gives us nothing of real experience to chew on. The only thing we learn from such writing is the number of tough questions Willis can raise without resolving any of them. (Of course if you're going to bed with your obligations to womanhood rather than with a man, you may have to sacrifice mental clarity.)

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Women who have struggled to identify and cast off socially defined roles may have fallen into a new trap; they may begin to feel that every act, every choice, is only a role ("the psychologist in me suggests . . . the feminist retorts . . . "). In the family essay, Willis imagines herself getting married (for the second time). In an essay on her brother's conversion to orthodoxy, she describes her trip to Israel and her encounters with orthodox women, but the climax of the piece is her own imagined conversion (a moment of unintended comedy). In each case, of course, the change in her life is firmly rejected—and with a flurry of nervous and indignant arguments that make one think that the new "roles" were entirely provisional.

NOW IN HER late 30s, Ellen Willis is the daughter of a Queens housewife and a "politically liberal" New York police lieutenant. Her sense of having fought her way up and out of the lower-middle class probably contributes to her remarkable candor on issues of class. In pieces written during the 1960s, her early awareness of the bourgeois underpinnings of the "revolutionary" counterculture remains refreshing. The kids who gathered at Woodstock, she points out, had always been taken care of and remained placid because they expected to be taken care of at a rock festival too. In a fine—and, in its time, influential—analysis of the radical demonstrations at the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago, she laments the bohemian and elitist contempt of new left activists for the white working class. While loathing Norman Podhoretz's ideas and values as well as his need to ingratiate himself with power, she is ruefully appreciative of his upwardly mobile hustle. ("Just as he used his intellectual skills to get out of Brownsville, I've used mine to stay out of the kitchen.")

Heavily schooled in Marx, Freud, and Reich, and disputatious by nature, Willis is given to dialectical irony as a method of analysis. From a 1979 essay:

> Leftists are now romanticizing the family and blaming capitalism for its collapse, while ten years ago they were trashing the family and blaming capitalism for its persistence. . . . If an increasingly conservative capitalism has propelled the seventies backlash, it was dynamic liberal capitalism that fostered the sixties revolt.

She might be called the bastard daughter of the *Partisan Review* intellectuals of the 1930s and 1940s. Sharing so much of their intellectual temperament, she nonetheless rejects their distrust of mass culture. In intellectually ambitious terms that would have made the late Philip Rahv ill, she celebrates the degree of personal expression in the most commercialized of all pop forms, rock music. Like most of the deep-dish rock critics, however, she writes about the cultural and autobiographical significance of rock rather than about the music itself.

Willis's insistence on hedonism as the center of a sane life is perhaps her most engaging quality, and one that separates her from a lot of feminists. For instance, she boldly attacks the anti-porn pressure groups on the grounds that the moralism of their crusades is really a mask for traditionally "feminine" notions of evil male lust versus female purity; women should be able to experience lust without feeling degraded or guilty (in a related piece, she calmly suggests some plausible directions for a specifically female pornography). For the same reasons, she shreds the counterculture's much publicized advocacy of sexual freedom, which, on examination, turns out to be freedom for men and not for women.

This way of never being taken in by her own side makes Willis a challenging figure for the left. It also propels her, inevitably, into a kind of void—the classic fate of the American who takes the possibilities of individualism literally. No party or program could hold her or any of the bohemian radicals like her; to borrow a trope of Susan Sontag's, she wants only to lead herself into the promised land. The trouble with this collection is that Willis hasn't made clear what's *in* the promised land. All this talk about "liberation"! Liberation to do what? Listen to good rock, enjoy sexual relations with men in which the partners are spiritual equals. . . . But what else? These essays are depressing because Willis, the avowed hedonist, seems to take little pleasure in life apart from her own intellectual activity. Her personal culture, as it appears here, is thin, monomaniacally political—a collection of attitudes rather than felt experiences.

Insisting on her individualism in every essay, Willis switches sooner or later to that familiar new tense, the universal feminine: "Under present conditions, heterosexuality really is dangerous for women. . . ." Perhaps; but so is writing like that. The charged generalizations that once announced a passionate solidarity now sound like the betrayal of the idiosyncratic self, a new version of the disconnectedness that feminism was intended to end. It's not that the issues of feminism have been settled—far from it—but only that the discourse on feminism has grown stale as a literary mode, especially as an autobiographical mode. Many men and probably many women too are sick of "women." We are as hungry as ever for anecdotes, stories, narrative, testimony. But no more, please no more of this endless self-dramatization and shuffling of "roles."

David Denby

David Denby is film critic for *New York* magazine.

Satire on the Soviets

The Radiant Future
by Alexander Zinoviev
translated by Gordon Clough

(Random House; $13.95)

This exasperating book contains just enough substance to make it at least a curiosity worth reviewing, but no one who is not impelled by professional duty need actually read it. It is the second novel by Alexander Zinoviev, 58, who was a professor of philosophy specializing in mathematical logic at Moscow University until his first book, *The Yawning Heights*, published only in the West, brought about his disgrace, disfranchisement, and expulsion in 1978. He now teaches philosophy at the University of Munich.

It has become our custom to receive any writer with credentials like these as not only a moral hero but also a transcendent literary artist. More than one

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reviewer of his earlier work (which differs from this one principally in being 542 pages longer) actually compared him to Jonathan Swift. Assuming that Zinoviev himself is not entirely free of the universal misanthropy that informs his work so far, the uncritical reception accorded him must confirm his opinion of literary intellectuals and thus afford him some wry amusement. Since he is manifestly intelligent, and apparently not much given to self-delusion, he must realize, if his critics will not, that he is no writer, at least not of fiction, and that what he offers here as an eccentric and brilliant analysis of the Soviet malaise is nothing more than what one hears by the hour in any reasonably freethinking Moscow salon. The only difference is that it is often more coherent, trenchant, and entertaining there.

The narrator and central figure has no name, no face, no spine, no genuine convictions, and almost no existence. This is doubtless intentional, since he is head of the Department of Theoretical Problems of the Methodology of Scientific Communism in an important Moscow institute, and it is one of the incessantly repeated theses of the book that incumbency in such a post is itself *prima facie* evidence of nonentity. To the extent that X (let us call him something) has any character at all, he is a Soviet amalgam of Dagwood Bumstead, Jiggs, Archie Bunker, and all the other luckless dimwitted fathers in the productions of popular culture whose clumsy efforts to provide and protect are repaid by raillery and grudging affection.

Relatively high up on the greased pole of official preferment, he enjoys what perks come his way, takes pleasure in being able to promote the careers of his children and friends, can afford a privately rented room for assignations with his mistress, and so on. He envies the much greater luxuries of careerists who are more adroit than he is. He feels his dignity somewhat compromised when others see him queuing up for some rotten potatoes, but he is by no means above rushing out with his whole family to a store that has just received a shipment of scarce toilet paper. He is thoroughly at home in the make-believe world of Soviet officialdom. His success rests not only upon his nimble and prompt conformity to all the sinuosities of policy but also upon his ability to spout the official line by the ream. He is the unacknowledged author of most of his chief's articles and speeches, which are to come out in a collected edition. When these are reviled by his more outspoken acquaintances for their primitive stupidity, he sometimes feels ill at ease, but nothing more. It goes without saying that he believes in absolutely nothing that he or any official says or does. In Moscow, X is counted as a liberal—liberalism being, by his own formulation, "merely attenuated Stalinism"—but then so, at one time, was Brezhnev.

LACKING the courage and imagination to be a dissident, he befriends one, a veteran of some 12 years in the camps and a low-ranking member of his department named Anton Zimin. Zimin is the good man and *raisonneur* of this rambling tract. He has written a book entitled *Communism—Ideology and Reality*, which he is trying to publish abroad, without success; its poker-face jargon puzzles Western sympathizers, who are put off by its seeming lack of anti-Soviet zeal. Zimin's thesis gives ironic point to Zinoviev's title, *The Radiant Future*, for he declares that the future is now. No waiting necessary: this is communism—this filthy, drab, hungry, terrifying sewer of existence filled with interminable lying and shoving and squabbling is the genuine article. Whatever Marx and his current vicar on earth may say, communism is not some distant goal, some resplendent purpose, for the sake of which no sacrifice, no enslavement or murder can be too much. It is wrong to say, as I did above, that the world in which these characters live is "make-believe," that is, unreal. "Make-believe" is the reality of communism.

THE DIFFICULTY is that no reliable study of this already achieved if not over-achieved communism has even begun. The notion that "scientific Marxism" might serve as the instrument for such a study is of course absurd, since Marxism is no science; it is an ideology and a part of what is to be studied. Zimin's icily deadpan project is to undertake the first authentic study of the current social system in the Soviet Union and to do so in terms appropriate to what that system really is: communism. His impeccable manipulation of the jargon of Marxism-Leninism is said not to appeal to émigré editors in the West, but I find it hard to believe that no one caught on to such passages as this (which might have needed the italics that I have supplied):

> Soviet history really . . . *is* a history of congresses, meetings, plans, obligations, overfulfillments, conquests of new fields, new departures, demonstrations, decorations, applause, folk-dances, farewell ceremonies, arrival ceremonies, and so on; in brief, everything which *can be read* in official Soviet newspapers, journals, novels, or which *can be seen* on Soviet television, and so on. There are certain things which *happen* in the Soviet Union and which *do not appear* in the media of mass information, education, persuasion, and entertainment. But all this represents in this context an immaterial *non-historic* background to *real* Soviet history.

Zimin's wry character almost saves the book. His sardonic humor is refreshing under the otherwise insipid circumstances, but it is hardly so astonishingly original as critics have declared it to be. Zimin thinks that communism is irredeemably evil and contrary to human nature; still, if that is the end, these *are* the means. Zimin's rhetorical machinery does not differ in principle from Fred Allen's celebrated remark that California is a nice place to live—if you're an orange. Half the tough-minded Soviet intellectuals of my acquaintance talk in exactly the same way.

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have read far before realizing that Zimin has the conscience and the independence of mind that the narrator totally lacks. Passages from his book and conversation gradually install themselves in the consciousness of X, who sometimes mistakes them for his own. Lest anyone fail to appreciate the venerable literary device being employed here, Zinoviev at length makes it perfectly clear: "I felt as if he and I were one single person divided up in a most absurd way."

The Radiant Future is in fact built more or less absurdly out of a miscellany of little sections, many of them less than a page long, none longer than a few pages. What narrative there is has to shift for itself amongst this welter of anecdote and *faits divers*, which are, in the main, the most diverting things in the book, as Zinoviev mercilessly ridicules Soviet practices. The title refers not only to Zimin's thesis but also to an immense concrete structure supporting gigantic stainless-steel letters that spell out the slogan LONG LIVE COMMUNISM—THE RADIANT FUTURE OF ALL MANKIND. This is meant to encourage the proletariat while incidentally concealing from foreign visitors the ugly vacant lots behind it. It is forever collapsing and being rebuilt, which hugely irritates everyone except the drunks, lovers, addicts, whores, and homosexuals who find refuge amongst the letters. A board fence was erected, but

> as nothing could be seen behind the fence even when it was light, the Slogan became a seat of debauchery twenty-four hours a day. It became the haunt of foreigners, speculators, . . . and informers. It seemed that the Slogan was destined to become a kind of international salon. The famous KGB journalist Vladimir Couis [i.e., Victor Louis] became a habitué.

The slogan also seems destined, at this point, to become the metaphoric heart of the novel, but Zinoviev's attention is too dispersed to develop it. The occasional perfunctory reference to it merely serves to remind one of what a Nathaniel West, say, might have done with this material.

But if I was seldom reminded of West, I was never reminded of Swift. When *saeva indignatio* produces its modest proposal that Irish babies be eaten rather than supported by the state, the effect depends upon the revolting wit, to be sure, but it depends no less upon Swift's magnificent prose—"the proper words in the proper order"—and upon his ruthless curtailment of the number of those words. *Saeva indignatio* may seethe in its fury, as Zinoviev's does, but if the seething is not under the cool control of art it is not *saeva* but simply *taediosa*, not savage but tiresome.

Clarence Brown

Clarence Brown, professor of comparative literature at Princeton, is author of *Mandelstam* (Cambridge University Press) and other books.

Mysteries

Despite the enormous success of *The Mousetrap*, translating the traditional murder mystery to the stage is exceptionally difficult and seldom done well. The converse is also true; the murder mystery written as a play rarely reads well in book form. One reads Shakespeare, and Shaw, and maybe even Arthur Miller. Perhaps the one formula drama that reads nearly as well as it plays is Ira Levin's *Deathtrap* (Random House; $8.95), the text to the highly commercial play that opened in 1979. Grisly, clever, apparently intricate, with many lines that stand alone as though they were aphorisms carved from Oscar Wilde, the play is compulsive reading. At least it is until the last four pages; they are tolerable though obvious on the stage, but in the book they weight the affair with so heavy a final twist that the preceeding subtlety is lost. Even though the movement on stage distracted one's better judgment, in the book one returns to earlier passages, to see where the writer has misled, where the action is not credible, and one feels that mystery fiction is a series of cheap tricks, mirrors, puzzles, all without substance.

The feeling grows stronger with the most recent publication of another play, Simon Gray's *Stage Struck* (Seaver; $9.95). I have not seen the play, so for the first time must judge cross and double-cross without the image of the action on the stage. Here the initial scene is more broadly obvious, so that one is led into believing, then discarding, then believing again that one knows who is leading whom into what. Fashionable hints of homosexual motives cleverly satirize a portion of *Deathtrap*, while semi-serious discussions of sexual infidelities carry us back to *Sleuth*. One senses Gray (who wrote the very clever, very unpleasant *Butley*) weaving bits and pieces from both these plays into his outline, finding cross-references and echoing lines, so that the viewer will be drawn by a feint toward one of the two pre-prepared solutions. The end is flat and not surprising when read, though until then the pace and the wit keep one turning the pages. As seen, this play is not, one suspects, so good as either *Sleuth* or *Deathtrap*; but as read it trivializes a genre not at all trivial, providing self-consciously serious reviewers with one more datum in their case against taking mystery fiction seriously. It is, after all, so clearly just an entertainment.

Robin W. Winks

Brief Reviews

Letters from the Country by Carol Bly

(Harper & Row; $9.95)

Carol Bly has lived much of her life amidst the "lost Swede towns" of Minnesota. That phrase is F. Scott Fitzgerald's for the part of the state Nick Carraway was careful to say he did not come from, and to judge by Bly's evocation of subjective distance, Fitzgerald's St. Paul is about as far from these farms as Paris.

This collection of Bly's short essays, which originally appeared in the newsletter of Minnesota Public Radio, is an engaging mixture of specific, practical advice for rural improvement (self- and otherwise) and a sympathetic fiction writer's vision of a diminished sector of American life. Few novelists have distilled as accurately and poignantly as Bly the essences of small-town life—its dense configuration of satisfactions and impoverishments, the contradictory pleasures of community and isolation, and, perhaps the most elusive element, the difficulty of coming to a full exercise of individual capacity without seeming an alien, even a threat, to one's neighbors.

Each essay, an average of six pages centered on a theme, brings us another portrait or two so precise that Bly can hang her moral on it and convince by sheer illustrative vigor: "the . . . Sunday

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when the sixteen-year-old server, up to now so kindly lighting up, bowing, handing, censing, and snuffing, is about to quit. The censer is slapped down in the corner of the choir room, still sending up its rank curl; the server doesn't just step out of the cassock, he thrashes his way out of it, treading on the beautiful twenty-three buttons."

Bly has one theme, and the rest is variation: that farm families and small-towners, who have little occasion to encounter alternative styles, have been conditioned away from a recognition of the depths of "pity, happiness and grief" in their intimate lives and candor in their social lives. Residents of an inescapable community, few dare to make the saving distinctions that would allow them to be critical of one another and of their institutions, or of local and national politics, for fear of strewing their dooryards with corpses. But positive thinking ignores dangerous feelings, Bly insists, and the unaired feelings are poisonous. Consider the coach's rule that members of the football team returning from a game they've lost can't talk to one another on the bus!

Therefore, after "years of chill and evasive tact," sick of Bible camp thinking, which is all *contentment*, she suggests exercises in confrontation such as the Enemy Evening, at which all the discernible parties to a disagreement quarrel about, say, the defense budget, methods of fertilization, or drainage ditches, but do so openly, not behind shielding hands.

Bly, who expects more of people than they would dream of expecting of themselves, puts far too much faith in the magic of colloquy: she is a believer in symposia, in "big-city" resources, and in certain kinds of experts. She wants her small-town kids to have the addresses of all the reformers' organizations, of Jungian and yoga conferences, and of Common Cause, as if the accessibility of information were all that mattered. This is understandable given the covertness of dissension where she lives, but often it makes Bly less a biblical prophet than the resident Blake of the Humanities Council, who underestimates the threat of liberated passions as well as the intransigence of the well informed.

She has some truly crazy ideas as well—that television creates dyslexic male (though apparently not female) children; that "technique is the enemy of philosophy and goodness," a sweeping bit of poetical nonsense which even she disputes by example a hundred times; that small-town girls are the only ones who suffer an education in how to be ingratiating. On the other hand, she is concrete, even moving, in her instructions on how to talk with children if we want them to grow up to be thinking, rather than vacantly reverent, people. But disagreeing with this attentive and vivid writer, who provides at least one provocative opinion and one humane portrait per page, is like doing the exercises in a how-to book: we prove the efficacy of her argument for confrontation every time we disagree.

Rosellen Brown

Rosellen Brown is a poet and novelist who lives in a small town in New Hampshire.

Media Made In California: Hollywood, Politics, and the News by Jeremy Tunstall and David Walker

(Oxford University Press; $15.95)

Jeremy Tunstall, a professor of sociology at the City University of London, and David Walker, education and welfare correspondent for the *Economist*, have written a comprehensive work which embraces the state's newspapers, broadcasters, trade unions, entertainment industry, and the "very special brand of California power wielded in and around the media community." California, according to Tunstall and Walker, is "a world of performances, which are not confined to the studio or stage." The authors give us the history of the major film studios as well as of today's freelance independents, "creative accountants," and package deals. However, in their discussion of California's film schools, they omit the American Film Institute's Center for Advanced Film Studies, one of the country's finest film conservatories. (Three of the five nominees in this year's Academy Awards Best Picture Category were written by AFI graduates.) Otherwise, their picture of the film industry—the Beverly Hills work community, as they call it—is superb.

This scholarly book reminds us of what, in the age of Reagan, we can hardly forget: that the political use of media and entertainment techniques in packaging candidates has a long tradition in California. As Marquis Childs once wrote, "In the Golden West you do not run for office, you pose."

Joan Shaffer

Correspondence, *from page 7*

US Cruise missiles on British soil, and so on. Only six paragraphs later Kondracke notes that 68 percent of the public polled supports withdrawal from the Common Market, and we are not told at all of the polls which show a majority against the Cruise. These positions may be in "a field off to the left"; if so, it is a pretty crowded field.

More serious is Kondracke's slur on Tony Benn's democratic credentials: "Benn . . . accuses the press of bias against him and hints of controls if he should ever come to power." A serious charge deserves some supporting evidence: where does Benn suggest that he would abridge freedom of the press? As for press bias, earlier in the same paragraph Kondracke describes Benn as a "leftist incendiary." Even the figurative meaning of the phrase points to "civil strife, violence, dissension and sedition" in my dictionary. SDP leaders, on the other hand, are "well-respected figures." Both Labourites and Social Democrats are democratic politicians taking their politics to the people. They should be treated as such in your pages.

Peter Mandler
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Morton Kondracke replies:
I meant that Benn is fiery, not seditious. That he is a leftist is hardly open to question. Historically, he has favored worker control of industry, public ownership of major businesses, nationalization of banks, and import restrictions. On a trip to the US last year, he said that the West had no right to criticize the Soviet Union for intimidating Poland because of America's own support for oppressive right-wing dictatorships (as if the United States, like the Soviet Union, stamps out democracy wherever it can find it). As to the press, Benn said in 1972, "I sometimes wish the

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trade unionists who work in the mass media, those who are writers and broadcasters and secretaries and printers and lift operators . . . would remember that they too are members of our working-class movement and have a responsibility to see that what is said about us is true. . . ." He also said in 1972 that "the political relevance of the media demands that broadcasters be accountable. . . . What is required is therefore some way of developing a new framework to democratize this power without falling into the trap of state control or confusing commercial competition and free enterprise control with the free expression of different views on the air." I heard him toy with similar ideas at the Labour party conference in 1978. Exactly what he means, I don't know, but he seems to be hinting that Bennites in the pressroom ought to be able to tell editors what to print.

The editors welcome correspondence from *TNR*'s readers. Letters intended for publication should include the correspondent's full name, address, and telephone number, should be typed double-spaced and held to under 200 words. Longer letters may be abridged due to lack of space.

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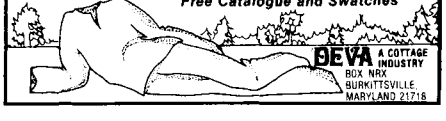
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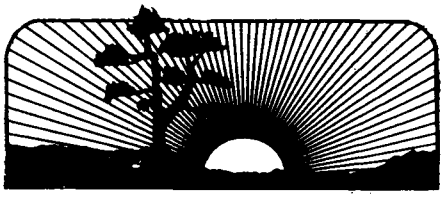

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Traveler's Diarist

Political Rites

"He who laughs," wrote Bertolt Brecht, "has not heard the grim tidings. . . . Talk about trees is almost a crime, implying silence about so many horrors." I do not know just how gloomy the Communist poet laureate's own life was, but his biographers tell us that he made gloomy the lives of just about everyone he touched. Zealots are forever doing that by imposing their experience of dark times upon even the smallest of joyful moments. It is one mark of the totalitarian mind that it forces politics across all boundaries. Indeed, as in these Brecht lines from an especially hortatory verse called "To Posterity," it is the primacy of politics that is asserted, politics before nature, before intimacy, before privacy, before celebration, before contemplation, politics before and above everything. It is oh, so tedious, and never more tedious than when the commencement festivities of students, their families, and their teachers are marred by fanatics with armbands and placards and strident voices trying to turn a happy occasion into a political opportunity. At Brandeis, where I am a trustee, this has been happening for years. This May the cohort of outraged students was numerically insignificant, but the Hillel Foundation chaplain, Albert Axelrad, made up for the indifference of the graduates. These students, so callous as to be visibly pleased with their own educational achievements despite the suppression of freedoms in South Korea, received a long political harangue disguised as an invocation to the Almighty. The rabbi was wearing a white armband, a bit tattered and yellowed from use on behalf of causes dating back at least a decade. A handful of students and faculty also sported the white armband, but one young woman I asked couldn't tell me just what injustices she was protesting. Like the rabbi's, apparently, hers is a standing protest. Axelrad chose to preach about El Salvador and Atlanta, the twin evils of the season. He has no sense of what is appropriate. What, after all, have these places to do with the reason several hundred young people were gathered before him? Of course, they did not gather to hear him at all, but custom dictates that commencements begin with prayer. This gathering, however, heard no prayer. Axelrad, unaccustomed to an audience of thousands save at commencements, finds the podium an irresistible platform for discourse. And his political logorrhea was contagious: the Catholic chaplain, Father Maurice Loiselle, who was there to pronounce the benediction, exhorted (also about El Salvador and Atlanta) instead of doing what he was invited to do, which was to bless.

Another commencement custom of more recent vintage (and also not unique to Brandeis) is that black students sit together in the front rows. Not all black students, mind you; the brave ones don't. As the audience rose to sing the first and fourth stanzas of "America the Beautiful" I saw, from the platform where I was sitting, the protesting claque of blacks remain seated. Oh, how tedious, I grumbled aloud. But these black students were outraged by more than America. Later in the program, they rose in unison to scream down the bestowal of an honorary degree on Helen Suzman, for years the intrepid voice of principled opposition to apartheid in the South African parliament. Doubtless she is not extreme enough for these students who, for all their militancy on a beautiful May morning in Waltham, are not likely to be intrepid anywhere. The black students, following the example of the Jewish chaplain, saw no reason to refrain from staging their own political protest. The other students, white and black, finding themselves willy-nilly in a political confrontation, also rose in unison, with their families, to do homage to the person whom history will remember with reference to apartheid South Africa as it remembers Pastor Martin Niemoller in Nazi Germany.

The political habit runs deep at Harvard, too, where I've gone to commencements for more than half my life, first as a graduate student and latterly as a faculty member. This time there were yellow and green armbands, the first for El Salvador, the second for Atlanta, whatever "for" means. Historically, it is not the students who have been responsible for introducing politics to Harvard commencements. Momentous public speeches are often made at Harvard fests, like George Marshall's announcement, upon receipt of an honorary degree, of his famous plan. The shah of Iran also was so honored, though I don't remember whether he spoke. Usually degree and speech go together. But last year Cyrus Vance, soon after resigning as secretary of State, gave a speech enunciating the canons of his certifiably failed foreign policy. He didn't get his honorary degree until this year. This year, Thomas Watson, formerly of IBM and our embassy in Moscow, gave the big speech. Maybe he'll get his honorary doctorate next year. Will Alexander Haig ever get one? I'd guess not, and not only because of his politics.

The mood of the times at Harvard can be gauged by the response of the crowd to the various groups of graduates as they stand for their respective degrees. As the new PhDs in arts and sciences stood to hear themselves welcomed into "the ancient and honorable company of scholars," the assembly appeared to console them in their bleak job prospects. As the MAs and doctorates in business administration rose to be charged with responsibility for the nation's industry and commerce, the crowd was markedly friendly. This was new. In years past, a slight note of disdain—hissing and booing, in fact—had run through the audience. The audience is more tolerant now, and smarter, too.

A fortnight ago I presided over a 70th birthday celebration in Jerusalem for its mayor, Teddy Kollek. This was not a political event—and largely because Teddy is not really a political man. As Sir Isaiah Berlin wrote in a special birthday essay, "When someone tells you that he is a realist, this often means that he or she is about to tell a lie or perform some cruel or shabby act; this, as everyone knows, is true of some of the most effective men of action at all times. Teddy Kollek is exceedingly effective; yet . . . he is the very opposite of this kind of a realist. . . ." Which is why, despite all of the political, ecclesiastical, and financial pressures Notre Dame must have felt not to honor Teddy Kollek with a Doctor of Laws, it did so anyway. The citation read, "Guardian of the peace in mankind's spiritual epicenter. . . . He has . . . struck a delicate balance between the profound and the profane, between sacred sites and sanitation, between the claims of historic tradition and the needs of the living city . . . a man perfectly matched by destiny to his historic role as builder and conciliator of the holy city." Not since David has the city had a wiser administrator; not since Solomon, a more humane one.

M.P.

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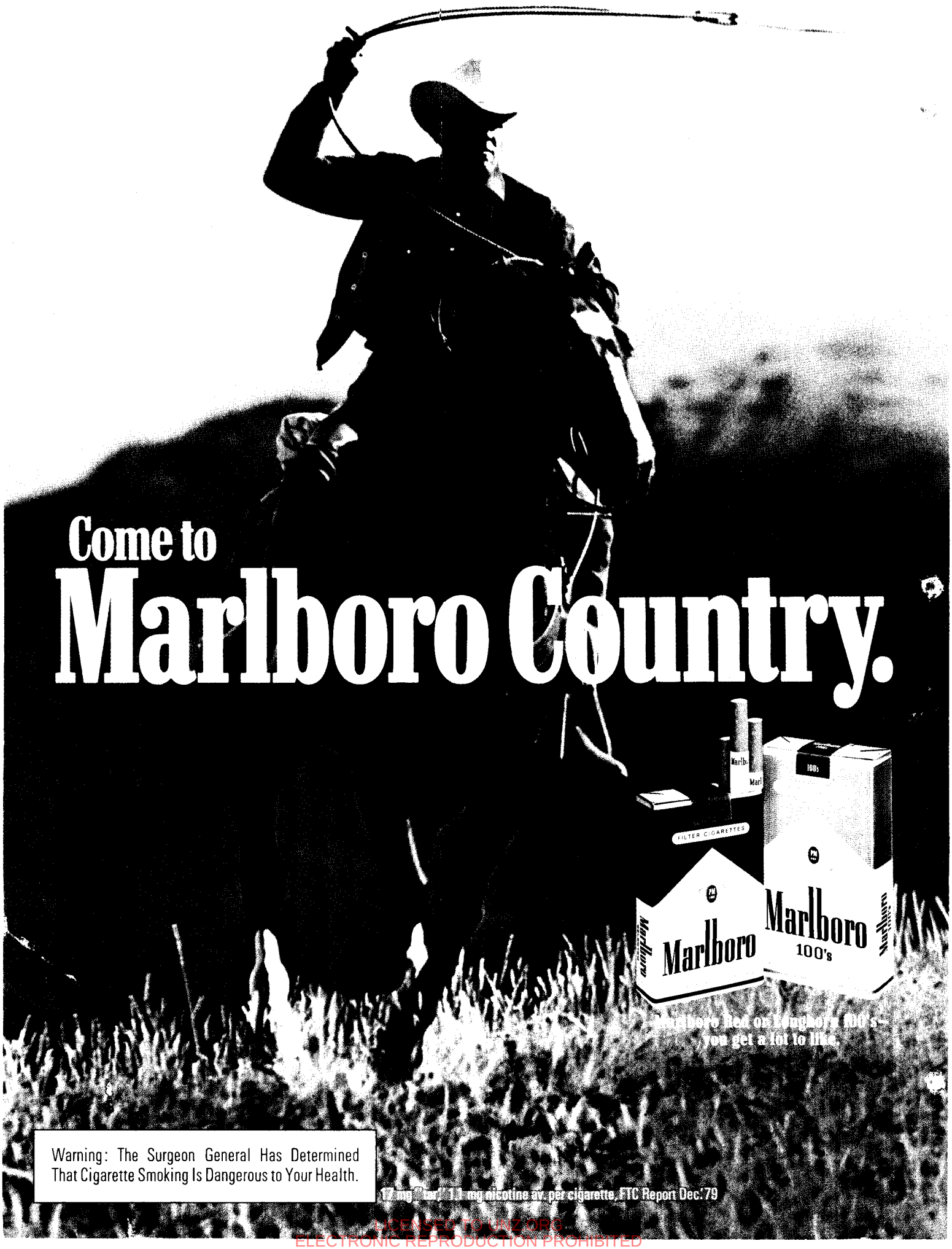

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